

# Backwoods



# Home magazine

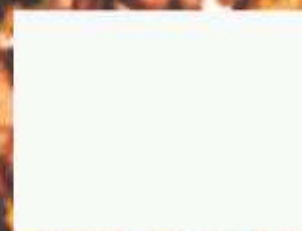
practical ideas for self-reliant living

July/Aug 2002  
No. 76  
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## Alternative living

**Tipis, yurts, & straw-bale houses**  
**2 experiments in freedom**  
**Buying surplus firearms**  
**The healthiest eggs**  
**Dehydrating foods**  
**12 great herbs**

[www.backwoodshome.com](http://www.backwoodshome.com)



**Backwoods Home Magazine** is written for people who have a desire to pursue personal independence, self sufficiency, and their dreams. It offers "how to" articles on owner-built housing, independent energy, gardening, health, self-employment, country living, and other topics related to an independent and self-reliant lifestyle.

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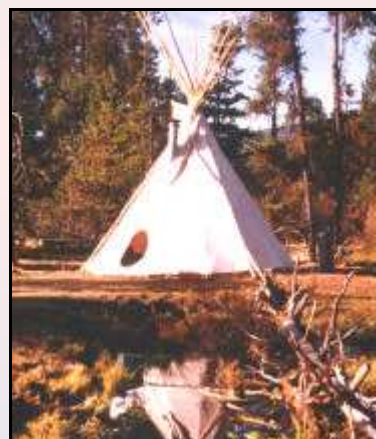
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## ABOUT THE COVER

This issue's cover is a photo of the tipi Dynah Geissal and her husband built, then lived in for four months. She writes, "We bought our land August 1. The elevation is 4600 feet, and the first snow can be expected around September 20. Our first priority was shelter for the livestock, so we were unable to begin our own home until September 17. We knew we would need something substantial to serve as a temporary home." For those who wonder how livable a tipi can be, she adds it was warm and comfortable "...even at 25 below..."



## FEATURES

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This isn't for camping. Dynah Geissal actually lived for four months in a tipi she made herself while she and her husband built their house. In this article she tells us how you can build a tipi of your own.

#### 24 Yurt magic — building an enchanting instant house By Claire Wolfe

A housing concept that was developed by nomads in Mongolia, the yurt today can be a modern marvel with skylights, indoor plumbing, and electricity, and the basic unit can be set up in a day and costs less than \$10,000.



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You don't have to pay top dollar for a useful firearm. Jeff Salmon explains how you can get surplus firearms that are safe, durable, effective, and inexpensive.

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For less than \$1800 you can get the tools, know-how, and licensing to start your own post-construction cleaning business that will gross you upwards of \$2,000 a month.



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#### 8 Dehydrating fruits & vegetables By Alice B. Yeager

Why not dehydrate some of your garden's bounty so you can enjoy it year-round?



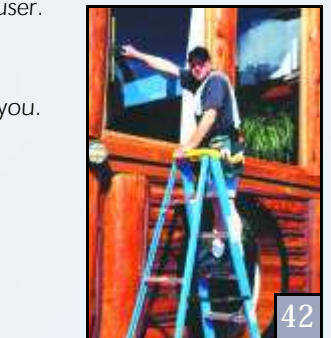
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#### 36 Get to know your herbs By Alice B. Yeager

There are four easy-to-grow herbs that can make ordinary fare into gourmet dishes. Alice Yeager tells us how to grow them and use them. In addition, she also tells us how to cultivate catnip for your loyal mouser.

#### 63 Happy chickens — healthy eggs By Edna Manning

Free range chickens are not only cheaper to keep, they're healthier and their eggs are better for you.



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Seven herbal teas offer a variety of health benefits, ranging from naturally occurring vitamins and minerals to having the effects of a broad spectrum antibiotic. But best of all, they just taste good.

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Wutzke and her husband have lived on the road since 1988. She outlines the 13 steps they took to ensure their freedom.

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In the third of her "foraging the wilds" series, Jackie talks about finding, preparing, and preserving cactus.



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## Publisher's Note

### Still the hottest magazine in America

We remain the hottest magazine in America. It seems that our uncompromising adherence to the principle that self-reliance in all things is the most important asset a person can have is now in style. The nation appears to have woken to the perils and uncertainties of the world, and people instinctively realize that the best way to cope is by taking a personal interest in looking after themselves and their families. Isn't it nice to realize that, as a regular reader of *BHM*, you've known that all along.

### Return of the \$10 anthology

The \$10 anthology is back. This special price (the lowest in our 13-year history) was offered a couple of years ago, but we discontinued it after an issue or two because the postage to mail the books was killing us. This time we've lumped in our CD-ROM anthologies, as well, and we're charging \$3.95 shipping if you order only one or two anthologies, but giving free shipping if you order three or more.

These anthologies are collections of articles from previous issues, stripped of advertisements. They are timeless compilations of how-to information involving building, generating electricity, growing and storing food, and taking care of everything imaginable around your home and property. A complete set of the books and CD-ROMs (you can view them in detail on pages 91-96) will give you the most comprehensive encyclopedia of preparedness, survival, and self-reliance available anywhere.

### If you change your address

If you change the address to which you get *BHM* mailed, please let us know and send us both ***your old address, along with your new one***. This includes if the post office changes your rural address to a street address. Even if you don't like the idea that they changed your address, we must have the address they've assigned to you or they won't deliver the magazine to you.

### A Boston trip to visit my tax money

After this deadline, John Silveira, Lenie, Annie, and I will head East and meet up in Boston with Massad Ayoob, Richard Blunt, and Oliver Del Signore in sort of an editors' powwow. I like visiting Boston because I grew up there and because it's a handsome waterfront town.

Being a handsome town has its price tag however. Boston is in the midst of the Big Dig, which is a huge, mainly Federal Government-funded project to put the city's downtown expressway system underground. The cost has soared from an original estimate of about \$3 bil-

lion to more than \$13 billion. One longtime friend there told me he's surprised the rest of the country isn't in revolt at the way Boston has spent so many federal tax dollars. At one point welders were being paid \$150 an hour in overtime. Some cops guarding the project have earned as much as \$80,000 overtime in a single year. And of course you must be a member of one of our nation's big liberal unions to work the project.

So as much as I like visiting my old hometown, it is a striking lesson in how the ultraliberal cities of the East eagerly suck down tax dollars the Federal Government has extorted from the thousands of conservative and libertarian small towns across America. And what do they give us in return? Hell, I can't even take my defensive firearm on this trip to protect my family from the city's muggers. If I do the Boston cops will mug me and throw me in jail.

So why is there no revolt in the rest of the country at the way a city like Boston eats up our tax money while simultaneously stripping us of crucial rights? Few people outside Boston even know the Big Dig is going on. The big cities are relatively insulated against outside criticism because only their serial killers and school shooters make the national news. When they rob us blind to pretty up their cities, the liberal mass media hardly takes notice. One set of liberals steals our money and another set ignores it.

But someday the tax revolt will come. Either all at once like a big earthquake or slowly with an ever growing underground economy, people in the countryside will stop paying for the liberals' grand ideas.

### Astounding *ASG* numbers

Last issue we fulfilled our obligation to former *American Survival Guide* readers by sending them their sixth free issue. You may recall that *ASG* went out of business and we offered to fulfill their readers' subscriptions free for a year, with no strings attached. Our hope was that those *ASG* readers would like *BHM* so much that they would subscribe to *BHM* of their own volition. And they did. An astounding 55% of them did.

### Silveira's cheery poems are back

Silveira's cheery poems are back (see page 86). — Dave



**Dave Duffy**

# My view

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## Just Say No! to the Federal Government

Back in the 80s, Nancy Reagan championed a “War on Drugs” campaign that featured as its slogan “Just Say NO!” From what I could determine, the only people who took the slogan seriously, who imagined it would do anything to stem the use of drugs, were the drug warriors themselves. Everyone else pretty much laughed at or ignored it. But Nancy was right. She was just right about the wrong thing.

The real target of her “Just Say NO!” campaign should have been the Federal government itself.

There are two ways a government can control its citizens—by using guns or by using money. Money, of course, is the preferred method here in the USA. Congress passes some useless legislation designed to make themselves look good, or to address a manufactured or imagined problem, then threatens the states with loss of some type of federal funding if they do not comply. State legislatures and local officials, sheep that they are, scurry to comply lest their neighbor get more money to waste than they will.

And the people are slightly more oppressed.

If it only happened occasionally, we could almost live with it. But such laws are not occasional things. They make up the bulk of legislation passed by the self-serving professional busybodies we keep electing to “govern” us. It doesn’t matter that most of the laws are blatantly unconstitutional. I’ve searched and searched through my copy of the Constitution, over and over again, looking for the clauses that give Congress any authority over education, drug use, health care, housing, disaster relief, firearms, or any of the myriad areas into which they seem to relish sticking their collective noses. But I can’t find a single word enabling them to do what they do.

What was that? The Supreme Court said they could? So what? I’ve also searched for the clause that gives the Supreme Court the authority to decide what is constitutional and what is not. I can’t seem to find that one either. Does anyone really believe the Founding Fathers of this country wanted the government to pass judgement on itself? In fact, what they wanted, and what they designed, was a system whereby the people, through local government and through jury trials, were the ones who decided whether or not laws were constitutional.

Which is why it is time we American citizens got together, individually and on the local and state level, and Just Say NO!

We’ve got to start saying NO! to the threats of withholding funds. Indeed, we’ve got to start saying NO! to any funds not specifically intended for one of the very few

powers the Constitution actually grants to the Federal Government.

We’ve got to say NO! to the education reform that has dumbed down our children to the point where high school graduates need electronic cash registers with pictures on the keys to help them place the order and make change for a dollar, that hands diplomas to people who can’t find France on a world map, and who, in many cases, can’t read or write well enough to fill out a job application.

We’ve got to say NO! to the insane War on Drugs that allows our Government to imprison a higher percentage of our citizens than does any other country in the world, that does nothing to discourage drug abuse, and that actually creates the atmosphere of profitability that makes the drug trade attractive and dangerous.

We’ve got to say NO! to laws that seek to disarm Americans, that prevent us from defending ourselves against four-legged, two-legged, and bureaucratic predators.

We’ve got to say NO! to the debilitating and divisive welfare and quota systems that have served only to create an underclass of dependents, that has tainted the accomplishments of minorities who have struggled so long and so hard for true equality, that has divided a once proud people into warring camps, each desperately seeking the ear and approval of their masters that they might be granted an ounce or two of the king’s gold.

We’ve got to say NO! to the controllers, NO! to the bureaucrats, NO! to everyone who wants to help us for our own good.

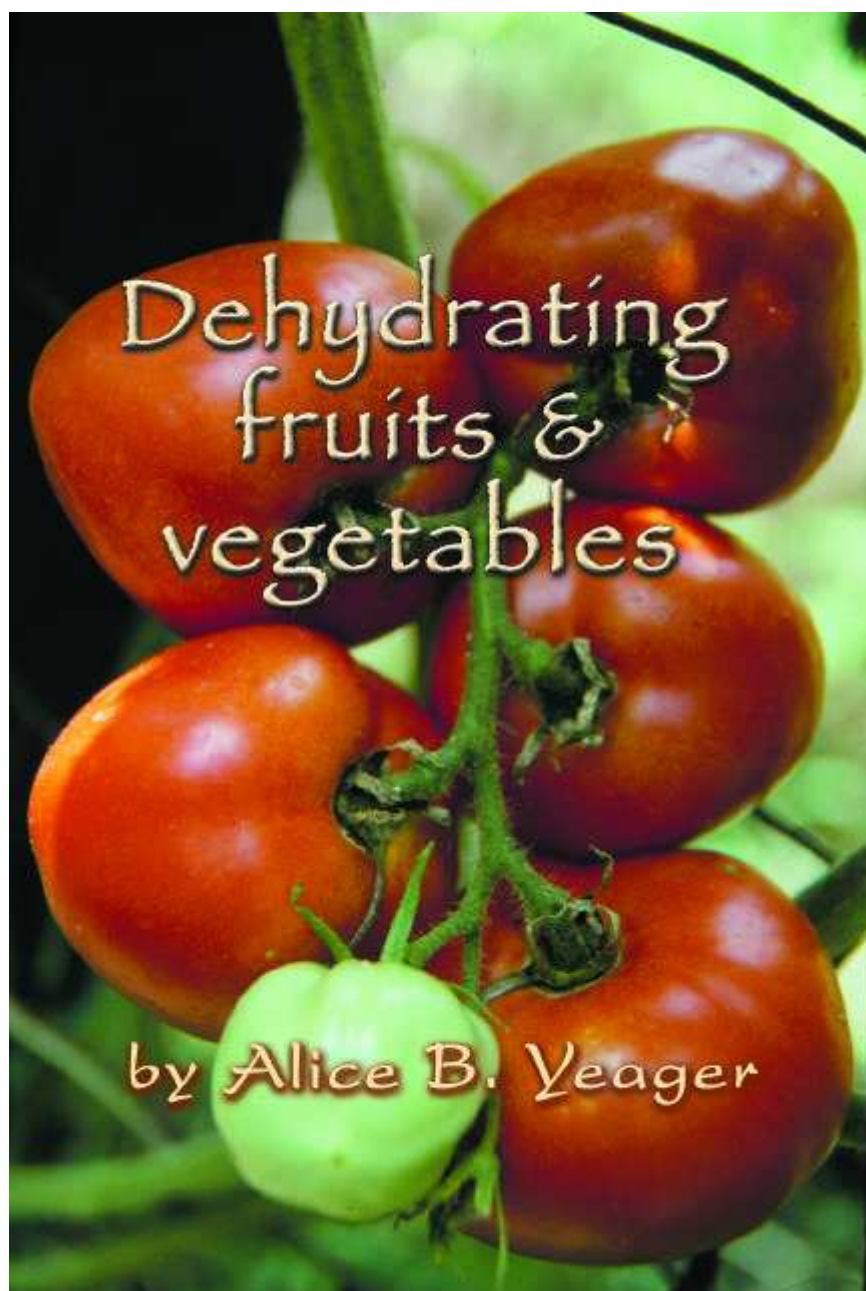
When we sit on juries, we’ve got to say NO! to the prosecutors and judges who seek to fine and imprison us for actions that harmed no one, except, possibly, ourselves. And when they try to legislate juryless trials, we’ve got to storm the seats of government and say NO! we will not accept the loss of our right to decide who is guilty and who should go free.

We’ve got to say NO!, NO!, NO! over and over again, until they finally get the message that Americans want to be free, that we want to be left alone to live our lives as we see fit, as long as we do not harm others.

We’ve got to start now, today, this very minute to take back the rights and the freedoms we have been letting slip away. For if we do not, if we continue to allow elected and unelected officials to castrate us, to neuter our rights, to dissolve our freedoms, it is our children and our grandchildren who will, in the end, pay the ultimate price. It is they who will live as slaves to the state. It is they who will look back, with tears in their eyes, and ask why we let it happen.

Just Say NO!

— Oliver Del Signore



**T**here are those who think the main health benefits a gardener gets from spending time in a garden can be summed up in exercise and fresh air—the same benefits afforded joggers, golfers, bicyclists and many other folks who enjoy being outdoors. The big difference is that serious gardeners have something besides sore muscles and aching joints to show for their time and effort. Their rewards

come in the form of fruits and vegetables not only to eat fresh but also to put away for those months when gardening isn't practical. It's true that gardeners may experience some bodily discomfort from tasks such as weeding, cultivating, mulching, etc., but the end results give immense personal satisfaction. A real sense of achievement goes along with being able to harvest at least part of the

family's food supply from the good earth.

One has to admit that the array of bins of brightly colored items in a supermarket's produce department is an enticing sight. That is, until you compare the taste of the commercially raised and well-traveled produce with what you raise in your garden just a few steps from your back door. This is where freshness prevails and there's quite a difference in the taste of green beans coming from the supermarket and the ones newly picked from your garden. With every mile, commercially transported produce loses something. It's called flavor and losing flavor means you're also being shorted in health benefits.

As spring begins its south-to-north trek, gardeners fall into step. Southerners are fortunate as they can begin planting and harvesting a lot earlier than northerners. Once, when we were visiting friends in Maine in late June, we watched our host carefully protect his young tomato plants against frost whereas our southern plants were already displaying their green tomatoes and reveling in warm weather. By the same token, our southern gardens are sometimes "burned up" by mid summer while the northern ones are going strong. In order to promote a producing garden and before planting anything—seeds *or* transplants—gardeners should acquaint themselves with average weather conditions, frost dates and so on in their areas. Patience will pay off.

At this writing, we have not had any major catastrophes in the United States since September 2001, but that does not mean we are immune from them. Security has been stricter, but there are many loopholes and we hear about them constantly on news reports. What does this have to do with gardening? To make a point, it could have a lot to do with our personal food supply. Food coming from our own gardens might be the safest

food we can put aside, and the time to start is now—not when devious people are wreaking havoc. Just ask yourself, “In case of emergency, what is more important than a good supply of food safely tucked away?” (Remember, there’s more than one kind of emergency.)

When we think of food storage, we sometimes have a tendency to think mainly of canning or freezing, but there is another important method—dehydration. Food put away by drying is an old, old form of food preservation. If you live in a dry climate where sun-drying is practical, you can very inexpensively dry plenty of fruits and vegetables either by using a solar dryer or by the gauze-covered-trays method. Both require close attention because of insects and changes in sunlight and humidity. If you live where humidity makes it risky to dry outdoors, you might consider investing in a good electric dehydrator. We have an electric one and it has been successfully used for several years. This takes the guesswork out of drying as you can control the temperature and dry food no matter what is going on outside.

Most vegetables and some fruits require blanching before beginning the drying process in order to preserve color and flavor. Steaming is actually preferred over blanching in boiling water, as there is less loss of nutrients. If you have to resort to blanching in water, be sure to have enough boiling water in a large pot so that the temperature will not be drastically lowered every time you add vegetables. Put the vegetables in a wire basket so they will be easy to retrieve.

After blanching, drain the vegetables thoroughly before putting them in the dehydrator.

One of the big advantages to drying fruits or vegetables is that the finished

product takes up a lot less room than canned or frozen items and no refrigeration is necessary. You do not need to use the same quantity of dehydrated items in cooking that you would use if they were fresh, frozen or canned. It is estimated that four pounds of fresh food equals about one pound of dried food and that pound is packed with nutrition.

Store any dehydrated vegetable or fruit in airtight freezer bags or tightly sealed, clean jars. Shelf life of dried items can be lengthened by storing them in a cool, dark room of 50° F., or less. The warmer the storage area, the shorter the keeping time. For instance, safe estimated storage time for dried tomatoes is three months if kept at 70° F., but they may be kept



*A surplus crop of figs can easily be turned into chewy sweet treats when cut in half and dried.*

six to nine months at 50° F. Just to be on the safe side, it is well to periodically check dried items for any signs of mold. If any mold is seen, discard that container of food.

Storing dried food in a refrigerator is risky, as the air in a refrigerator is moist. If there’s the slightest imperfection or tiny hole in a container, moisture can seep through.

**Caution:** The sooner you can put your dehydrated item in airtight storage containers, the better. Air contains moisture and dried food is quick to begin absorbing it. If you are really uncertain about some of the leathery

textured dried foods, you might consider storing those in the freezer. At least you’ll have peace of mind. That is, until the freezer goes out.

Nutritional value is lowered when food is canned, as the high temperature required for processing destroys quite a bit of the food value including Vitamin C. Dried food loses some value, too, if high temperatures such as 145° F., are used to speed things up, in which case you may end up with a very inferior product.

Canned goods in a pantry are not subject to the whim of the weather in case electricity fails. Frozen vegetables, on the other hand, will only keep for a certain number of hours in a freezer with the electricity off. If you have access to dry ice, you can offset thawing, but you’ll have to keep bringing in more dry ice until the power is restored. This is where a good generator comes in handy as it can keep things frozen with less trouble. Also, depending on size, it can keep other needed appliances working during power outages.

To aid in preserving fruits and vegetables, get an informative book such as *The Ball Canning Book* (address at end of article).

Once you get the hang of it, food preservation in one form or another can be very rewarding as a culinary accomplishment to say nothing of cutting down on the family food bill and being prepared for emergencies.

Most gardens are capable of producing more than one might think. When not pressed for time, most of us tend to delay taking out spent plants and replacing them with something fresh. For instance, spring greens bolt (go to flower) with the approach of warm weather. If these greens were removed as soon as they start toughening and show the begin-

ning of flower stalks, one could easily plant a summer vegetable such as beans, squash, etc., in the same spot and be a step ahead of summer weather. Dwindling English pea vines should be pulled up even though it's tempting to let them produce those few last pods. Other early producing plants can be dealt with likewise when their peak of production has passed.

Be alert to nutrition for your future plants by putting all discarded plants in the compost pile where they will decompose and become vitamins for your next garden. If plants show signs of disease, dispose of them away from the garden, as there's no point in reintroducing the disease to the garden when you use the compost.

Above all, use your space to grow food plants that you really like and that will give you the best return for your time and effort. If you are fond of green beans, don't just plant one variety. You can get awfully tired of one type of green bean. Why not grow more than one kind and avoid monotony? There are many choices to be had from seed suppliers.

Here in Southwestern Arkansas (Zone 8), most of us don't plant many of the beans recommended for drying. Our area has a tendency toward high humidity, which simply means we're also in a mold prone area.



*Tender, young beans, picked before beans begin to swell inside the pods, are best quality for drying.*

### Green beans with potatoes

1 pound green beans  
1 medium onion, coarsely chopped  
3 medium Irish potatoes, peeled and cut in half OR about 8 "new" potatoes  
1 cup diced, salt or cured bacon  
Salt and pepper to taste

Wash and snap green beans discarding any blemished spots, ends or strings. Put all items listed in a good-sized saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil and then cut heat back so contents will simmer. (Check occasionally to be sure pot does not boil dry.) When potatoes are done, beans should be ready to eat, too.

Old style salt bacon, which can still be purchased in some markets, is usually crusted with salt. If you are using this type, it might be well to boil the bacon slices in water to remove some of the salt before dicing them to combine with the beans, etc. Discard the salty water and proceed with cooking. Once the cooking is underway, use the taste test before adding seasonings.

This is the old way of cooking green beans—simple, but what flavor! If you are fortunate enough to have new (small) potatoes ready to use from your garden, you'll be in for a real treat. New potatoes sold in produce departments are not generally as new as you would be led to believe. New potatoes have such thin skins that you can almost slip them off with your fingers and the earthy flavor is still there.

Many varieties of dry beans such as Pinto do better in a drier climate. However we do raise Pinto and enjoy the young beans as snap beans. We also are successful in shelling the more mature beans while they are still green. We stop short of trying to let the crop remain on the plants long enough to harvest dry beans. If you like a particular bean recommended for drying but your climate is humid

like ours, try harvesting the beans in the green stage. You might be pleasantly surprised at the good bean taste.

Before making your selections of beans or any other vegetables, be sure that varieties are suited

to your area. If the description states, "Ideal for Northern climates," forget about planting that type in the South. Vice versa, the same goes for any vegetable that requires a long growing period, as it won't have time to mature properly in the North.

Beans, no matter where they are grown, like a sunny location, loose loamy soil with pH 6.0-7.0, and plenty of water during prolonged dry spells. Lima beans like a bit more soil acidity—pH 5.5-6.5. If you're not sure about your soil's pH, take a soil sample to your county extension agent and check it out.

Mulch bean plants to protect them against heavy downpours resulting in bunches of beans being splashed with dirt and requiring very thorough washing before being processed. Remember that bush beans usually give a bountiful harvest, but pole beans will bear over a longer period of time giving an even better account of themselves. Beans are one of the easiest vegetables to grow and, with

all of the varieties available nowadays, our freezers and pantries should never be ho-hum where beans are concerned.

Green beans may be dried by blanching the snapped pieces for 6 minutes, draining them and then drying them at 110° F., until they are brittle and crisp. Always use the tender, young beans that snap easily. The more mature beans will not give you a uniform product.

We tend to enjoy summer squash fresh rather than preserved some way, as the delicate flavor diminishes when the squash is processed. However if you'd like to try drying summer squash, just cut the squash into thin strips, blanch 3 minutes, drain thoroughly, spread on trays and dehydrate at 110° F. until leathery to brittle.

Winter squash, on the other hand, are not recommended for drying, but can be stored in a cool room and used during cold weather. These will keep for several weeks or months depending on the variety and they may be used in a number of ways.

Like most summer vegetables, squash plants do best in loose loamy soil in a sunny location but do need



*Yellow summer squash can be dried, but have the best flavor if enjoyed fresh from the garden.*

watering when drought threatens. Summer squash plants do not require as much room as the vining winter squash and the compact bush types may be grown in containers. Soil pH requirements are the same as for many other food plants—6.0-8.0.

Some varieties of winter squash may be trained on a fence or trellis if they do not produce large heavy squash. This gets the vines up out of

the way and gives you the ground surface to grow something else. Before planting winter squash, take note of the days required for maturity. You may want to start plants indoors in peat pots to get a head start and avoid cold snaps. Summer squash may also be planted indoors and set out after danger of frost has passed.

Summer squash is low in calories and has a goodly amount of potassium, whereas winter squash is a little higher in calories, higher in potassium, and very high in vitamin A. Summer squash cooks quickly and is also good raw with dips. Winter squash is great for use in pies, casseroles and for stuffing. (See recipes for both summer and winter squash.)

Tomatoes like a bit more acidity in the soil—pH 6.0-7.0, but they will produce in almost any good garden soil. The plants like plenty of sun, but we have found that some shade from pole beans or other tall plants during torrid afternoons is beneficial. Plants are like people in some respects—they appreciate some relief from the sun when temperatures hover around the 100° F., mark.

### Summer squash stir-fry

- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped or 3-4 green onions cut into 1 inch pieces
- 1 Tbsp. bacon drippings
- 4 medium zucchini sliced in 1/4 inch rounds
- 5 medium yellow straightneck squash sliced in 1/4 inch rounds
- 1 medium green bell pepper and 1 medium red bell pepper thinly sliced crosswise or lengthwise
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 2 tsp. dried dill weed (optional)

Using a heavy iron skillet, sauté onions in bacon drippings until just past firm stage. Add rest of ingredients and mix with onions. Stir-fry until vegetables reach your desired state of doneness. Some folks like to use a lid on the skillet to prevent evaporation of juices. Others prefer to use an open skillet and have a less juicy mixture.

Old-timers used to cook just yellow squash with onions and seasonings, but the addition of the green zucchini and red and green peppers makes the dish more colorful and the blend of flavors is so good.



*Winter squash are not recommended for drying, but are great for stuffing.  
The flesh is also good in pies, casseroles, and cakes.*

Don't crowd your tomato plants. Give them plenty of room according to variety, some requiring more space than others. The determinate types (limited in height) may be easily supported by tomato cages or stakes and the indeterminate, vining ones should be trained on tall supports such as cages made from reinforcing wire or bamboo. Plants that are planted too closely together are more prone to being spindly and more susceptible to whatever plant virus comes along. Unless struck down by drought or disease, tomato plants should bear until fall. If you're caught with quite a few green tomatoes when the first frost threatens, bring them indoors to a cool room, place them on paper on the floor or shelves and let them ripen.

Tomatoes are among the most nutritious and delicious vegetables we can include in our gardens. They are great in any form whether cooked or eaten raw. No pantry should be without an ample supply of canned tomatoes and they don't all have to be canned whole. Many are canned as stewed tomatoes for use in casseroles, tomato sauce for use with spaghetti, and so

on. This is where the canning guide comes in handy.

Don't overlook drying tomatoes. There are special varieties recommended for dehydrating. Not all types dry well so you don't want to waste time trying to dry tomatoes from the

beefsteak varieties. Instead, you need to raise smaller, meatier fruit such as Tuscany, Principe Borghese or Barbara Hybrid. Simply slice clean, whole tomatoes in half lengthwise, or, if they're over 3-4 ounces, cut them in three lengthwise pieces. Place the pieces cut side **up** on dehydrator trays, set the dryer temperature at 120° F., for about 24 hours. The finished product should be leathery but pliable. Drying time may vary in high altitudes or when humidity is high, so the best test is to check the texture.

Another easily grown vegetable and good for drying is the sweet or bell pepper. These plants require the same growing conditions as most other summer vegetables and if they are protected by tomato cages, they will have support for their branches. Plants laden with peppers have brittle limbs and are easily broken.

Although maximum health benefits are received when peppers are eaten raw in salads, dips, etc., peppers may also be dehydrated and kept indefi-

### Stuffed winter squash

3 medium size winter squash (Pick your favorite—acorn, butternut, etc.)  
1 cup finely chopped onion  
4 Tbsp. butter or oleo  
1 cup cooked brown rice  
1 cup cooked, crumbled sausage  
3/4 cup chopped pecans or walnuts  
2 large eggs, beaten  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper  
1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg  
2 cups grated cheese (your favorite)  
Honey (optional)

Halve squash lengthwise and discard strings and seeds. Bake covered at 375° F., about 25 minutes or until tender but still a bit firm. Remove flesh leaving a shell, but don't remove so closely that shell wants to tear easily. Thoroughly mash squash. Lightly saute onions in butter or oleo and combine with all ingredients except cheese.

Put mixture into squash shells and bake at 350° F., about 20 minutes until hot throughout and set. Top with grated cheese and return to oven to melt. If you'd like a bit of sweetness added to this dish, drizzle a bit of honey over each squash half as it is brought hot from the oven.



*Sweet peppers of all colors can be dried, reconstituted, and used in all manner of soups, stews, etc.*

nately in clean sealed jars. Simply take clean peppers, remove stems, seeds and any blemishes and cut the peppers into thin strips or pieces. Place them loosely on dehydrator shelves and process at 110° F., until pieces are almost brittle. This usually takes about 12-16 hours.

If you have an abundance of green onions about to put up seed heads in late spring, try dehydrating those, too.



*Leafy herbs such as sweet basil dry easily and are a boon to any kitchen.*

Clean by cutting off roots and removing seed stems and any blemished tops. Cut the tops in half-inch long pieces and the thicker bottom parts in quarter inch rounds. Place these loosely on dehydrator trays and dry at 110° F., for about 20 hours or until brittle.

Dried onions are good to use with egg dishes such as quiches, omelets, etc. They are also good to sprinkle over salads or to use in soups, stews, gravies, and vegetable dishes.

Garlic is almost indispensable when it comes to flavoring meats and almost anything but sweets. Garlic bulbs or cloves should be dug in summer while the plants are dormant. We brush the dirt off of them and store them in net bags until needed. However garlic can be dehydrated by removing the thin paper-like covering on the bulbs, slicing them very thin, and drying the pieces. Dry at 110° F until brittle and store in airtight containers.

When you want to use your dried foods, it may be necessary to make them usable by putting the water back into them. For dried fruits, this may not be

necessary, as they are often delicious as they are chopped over cereal, but if you intend to use them for baking in cakes, etc., they need to be rehydrated. To do this, put the dried fruit in a stainless steel or ceramic bowl (don't use aluminum) and pour enough boiling water over the fruit to barely cover it. Use a lid and let the fruit steep. Time length depends on the fruit. For instance, apples need to soak for 10 minutes, but plums (dried, they're known as prunes.) require twice that long. This is where a guide comes in handy until you are familiar with rehydrating.

For vegetables, it depends on what you have in mind. If they are going into soups, stews, or any liquid type dish, no rehydrating is necessary. Otherwise, put the desired amount of vegetables in a stainless steel or porcelain pot (again—no aluminum.) and pour enough boiling water over them to barely cover them. (More boiling water may be added later if needed.) Like fruit, vegetables do not all require the same amount of soaking. Some need to steep 10-15 minutes, others an hour.

Don't forget to grow some leafy herbs such as sweet basil, marjoram, thyme, etc. These are easy to dehydrate and can be crumbled to desired consistency of flakes or powder.



*A good supply of garlic is a must when cooking almost any meat. Garlic can be dried by stripping away outer paper shell and thinly slicing bulbs or cloves.*

Having fresh dried herbs on hand can give a gourmet touch to any casserole, soup, or stew especially during the months when fresh herbs are unavailable.

This is just the tip of the iceberg as far as drying foods is concerned. I believe the more we learn about preserving the fruits and vegetables we grow, the better off we are. We gardeners are not harbingers of doom, but it gives us all a sense of well being if we give notice to the Scout motto, "Be prepared"

#### Preserving guide

*Ball Blue Book: Guide to Home Canning, Freezing and Dehydration*, \$5.95 (includes postage and handling), IN residents add 5% sales tax. Send check or money order payable to: Alltrista Corp., Consumer Products Co., Dept. PK 31, P.O. Box 2005, Muncie, IN 47307-0005 Δ

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# TIPÍ

Build a  
beautiful,  
inexpensive,  
movable home

*By Dynah Geissal*

If you buy bare land, as my husband and I did, you will require some sort of shelter while you're building your home.

We bought our land August 1. The elevation is 4600 feet, and the first snow can be expected around September 20. Our first priority was shelter for the livestock, so we were unable to begin our own home until September 17. We knew we would need something substantial to serve as a temporary home.

A hunting camp tent would have worked, but the single walls would have lost heat rapidly, and anyway we didn't have one. A camper or a trailer could have provided needed shelter, but we didn't have either of those.

Twenty-three years prior, however, I had purchased 12-ounce canvas in order to build a tipi. It seemed prudent at the time, because I had three children and did not own a house. I figured we would always have shelter if we had a tipi, no matter where we were.

Not being much of a sewer, however, I had not gotten any farther than cutting out the strips of canvas. A friend loaned us a sewing machine that was more heavy-duty than ours, and my husband sewed the tipi. We were very glad to live in it for the four months it took to build our house.

For one thing, it is special because we made it ourselves. It was warm even at 25 below, the coldest it got while we lived in it. It is beautiful in its symmetry and roundness. I know it made a big difference in our attitude. After a month of cloudy weath-





er with highs around 15, I think if I'd had to go into a chilly, damp tent after working outside all day, it would have been difficult to remain optimistic and cheerful. A camper or trailer might have been warmer than a tent, but would certainly lack the romance of the tipi.

Now that we have a house, we miss the closeness we felt to the land when we lived in the tipi. It was almost like being outside. We could hear the creek and the owls and the coyotes. On very cold nights, we heard the gunshot-like cracks of the ice on the creek.

Looking up at the beautiful poles really lifted my spirits, and when you awake to the sunrise or the moonlight causing the inside of the tipi to glow, you'll find it was worth all the work.

After talking to knowledgeable people and reading *The Tipi Book* by Reginald and Gladys Laubin, I came to the conclusion that an 18-foot Sioux tipi would suit me best. The Sioux is the three-pole style, which is sturdier than the alternative 4-pole style.

An 18-foot tipi is the largest that is easily handled and transported. I wanted a large one originally because of my children, but even with just my

husband and myself I was glad to have the space since we were actually living in it and not just camping.

## Materials

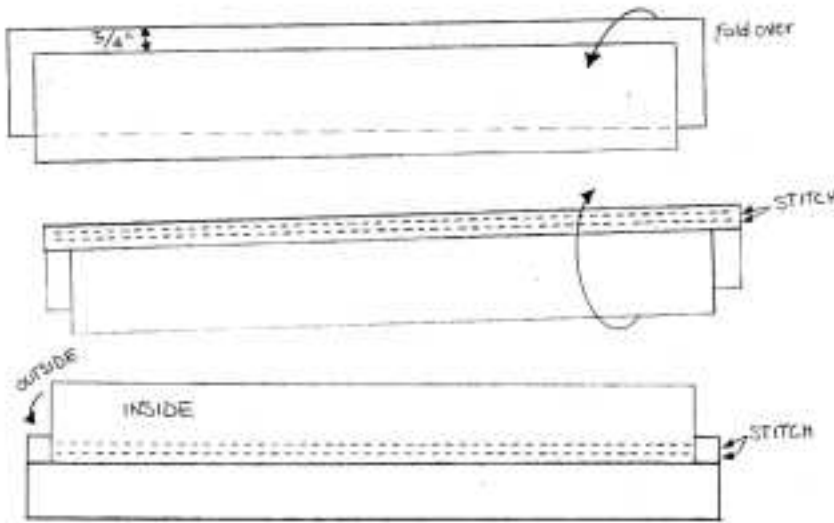
- 15 poles — 25' long, 3-4" in diameter at the butt and 2" in diameter 20' from the butt
- 2 poles — 20' long, 2" in diameter at the butt
- 70 yards of 8-, 10-, or 12-ounce canvas, 36" wide
- 36 yards of 8-ounce canvas or muslin
- 45 feet ½" Manila rope
- 20 feet ¼" rope
- 200 feet ⅜" cotton cord
- 30 pegs (traditionally chokecherry but any hardwood will do) — 18" long and 1" diameter
- 1 anchor peg — 36" long and 2" in diameter
- 14 chokecherry stakes — 14" long and ⅜" in diameter, peeled except for 4" at the butt
- 1 gallon waterproofing
- cotton wrapped poly thread for sewing canvas
- beeswax-coated unbleached shoemaker's thread for lacing holes

## The poles

Preparing the poles was a real act of love for us. We would have liked to have spent more time, and you should do so if you possibly can. The time you put in will save you much grief later on.

We used lodgepole pine—an obvious choice if you have access to it. We have lodgepole in abundance on our land, but whatever trees you use, they should be very straight.

Choose your poles very carefully. They should be three to four inches in diameter at the base and at least two inches at 20 feet. The poles can be as long as you want if you will not be transporting them much. If you will be, limit them to 25' or less. We made ours as long as possible for aesthetic reasons, since we didn't plan to move the tipi.



*Figure 1*

De-limb the poles with a hatchet and then peel them with a drawknife. The drawknife should be very sharp and is used with the beveled edge down. We put our poles on sawhorses to make the work easier. Drive two nails into each sawhorse to help hold the pole in place.

A note on safety here. If you're up in the mountains, an hour or more away from a hospital, you can't afford an accident. Some jobs, like de-limbing poles, don't take much thought, and your mind may tend to wander. The slip of a sharp tool can be very dangerous, so keep your mind on your work at all times. Another thing to remember is not to try to go too fast. Work carefully and deliberately and you'll get the job done safely.

Work on your poles until they are smooth and free of knots. When it rains, you want the water to maintain surface tension as it runs down the poles. Any imperfection can cause water to drip into the tipi.

Sharpen the poles at the butt end so that they will stick into the ground. Lay them flat to dry off the ground. We put them on boards spaced every couple of feet. We put ours in the sun because we had only one week to dry

them. A month or two would be better. Turn the poles regularly.

After the poles are dry you'll want to oil them. Any natural oil will do. This helps to keep the rain water running down the poles and not dripping into the tipi. Use at least three coats of oil.

## The canvas

I chose the heaviest canvas, which is 12-ounce, because I wanted the tips to stand up to years of use. The disadvantage of such heavy material is the difficulty in sewing it. An industrial machine will take care of that if you have access to one. We really had to

baby the White Jeans Machine that we used.

We opted not to waterproof our canvas, but if you choose to, be sure to sew it first. Most people agree that waterproofing is unnecessary and we found that to be true. The shape of the tipi and the tight weave of the canvas ensure that no water gets in.

Buy only light-colored canvas for your tipi, because you want it to be light and luminous. Canvas mostly comes in a 36" width, but if you could get it in 72" you would save lots of sewing.

Check around for prices before you buy, because there is a wide variation. Look for sales, but be sure to buy only quality merchandise.

Consider your needs before deciding how heavy your canvas will be. Eight-ounce is cheaper and much easier to sew, but will not last as long as 10- or 12-ounce. I wouldn't use 12-ounce unless you plan to use it for a permanent home because of the great difficulty in sewing, as well as the expense.

## Cutting it out

Lay out your canvas in a large, flat area. I had to lay mine out in the pasture to get a large enough space. Choose a windless day. If you're working on an 18' tipi, cut the canvas into six strips: 38'6", 38', 36'7", 34'4",

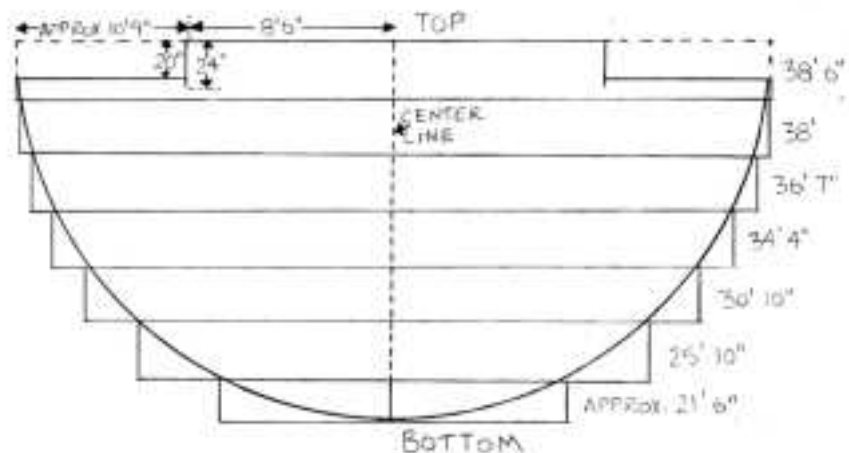


Figure 2

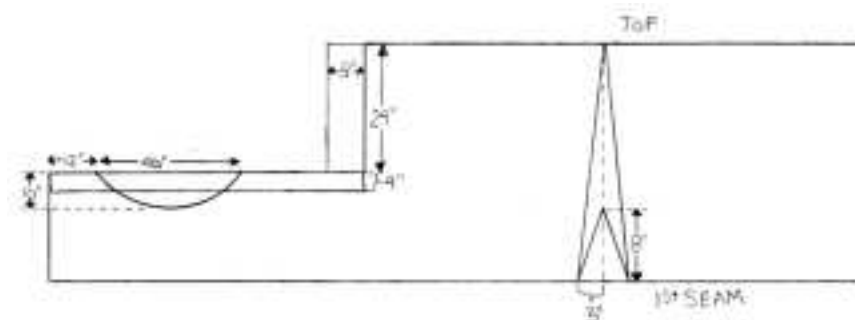


Figure 3



Figure 5: Button stitch

30'10", and 25'10" long, using the full 36" width of the fabric for the strips.

Determine the center of each strip. When you sew the strips together you'll have to match the center so that one strip is longer on both ends. Lay them out, top overlapping bottom, the longest strip being the top. It is very important that the seams overlap in that way so that the tipi will shed water.

The seam you will be using is called a *flat seam*. It has four rows of stitching and leaves no raw edges. You want to begin sewing with the longest strips. That way, when you have a large bulk of material, you are sewing the shortest strips. Otherwise, you would be pushing the entire tipi

through the opening between the needle and the body of the machine.

It is possible to get a flat seam attachment for some machines. That would make the sewing relatively easy. We couldn't find one for the machine we were using, so each seam required four passes through the machine. Don't even think about cheating on this step or your tipi will not have a long life expectancy. As with preparation of your poles, care taken now will reward you greatly later on.

Place the insides of your two longest strips facing each other (wrong sides together). The longer strip is on the bottom and extends  $\frac{3}{4}$ " above the edge of the other strip.

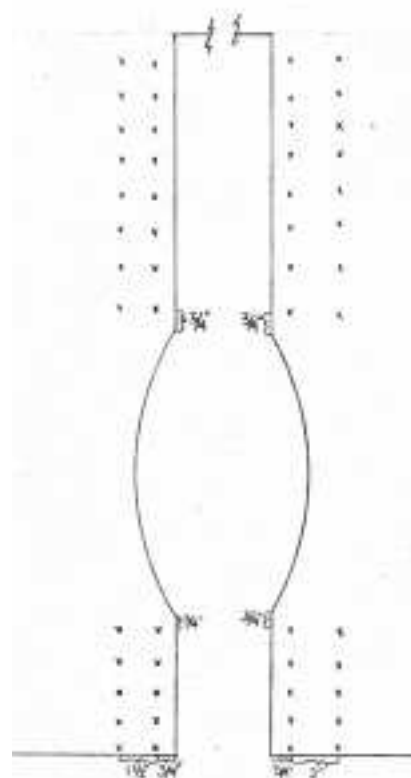


Figure 4

Take a chalkline and mark this so that you will have a guide. Fold the extra  $\frac{3}{4}$ " of the longer bottom strip over the edge of the shorter top strip. Sew two rows of stitching, matching the center points of each strip.

Turn the canvas over. Pull up what is now the bottom shorter strip so that it lies as an extension of the other strip. Sew two more seams. Repeat until all the strips are sewn together. See Figure 1.

Lay the cover out flat and find the center of the longest strip. Measure

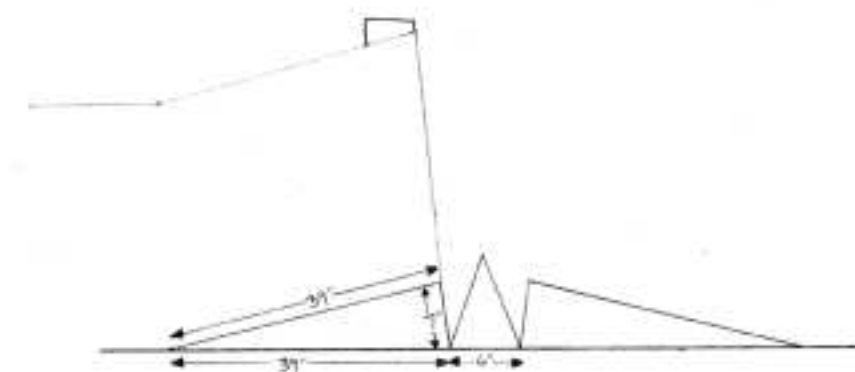


Figure 6

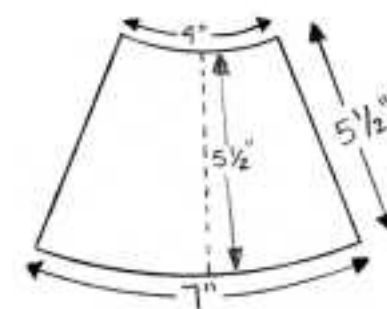


Figure 7

24" from the top edge of the strip and then out 8'6" in each direction. From the two upper corners of the strip, cut out 20" rectangles. The cut that is made perpendicular to the edge of the canvas is 24" but only cut out 20". The rest is for a hem. See Figure 2.

Sew the two rectangles together along the short edges. Center and sew the narrow strip to what was previously the bottom with a flat seam.

Drive a stake at the midpoint of the top strip and attach a non-stretchable cord the length of the radius of the tipi. Measure the half circle marking each strip where the end of the cord passes over. If the canvas is a little short somewhere, shorten the cord. If it's a bit short from the top to bottom, you can sew on another narrow strip.

On the first seam from the top, exactly below the center, measure 3" in each direction. From these points, cut straight up to the center point on the top edge of the canvas. Trim and hem the resulting triangle to a flap 6" wide at the base and 8" long. This is your tie flap, which attaches your

canvas to the lifting pole. See Figure 3.

Turn down and pin the extra four inches that were cut when the corner panels were removed.

Cut a half oval in each side to form the door. It should be 12" from the outside edge. After hemming, it should be approximately 46" long by 10" deep. See Figure 3.

Now hem the 4" that you previously pinned down. Hem the half ovals. Turn the edge under 1/2" and make the seam 3 1/2". Don't leave any exposed edges.

Lay out the canvas once again. Cut and stitch the holes for the lacing pins. Left and right we determined by standing at the top of the canvas and facing it. On the left side, the holes begin 3/4" from the hemmed door. The two rows are 1 1/2" apart. The outside row is 3/4" from the edge. On the right side, the holes are the same distance from the edge, but the rows are 2" apart. The vertical spacing is usually about 7", but could be as close as 4". You don't need holes all the way to the base of the smoke flaps, because tie tapes will be added there later. See Figure 4.

To make the holes, cut a cross with 1/4" arms with a razor blade. Button stitch around it with No. 10 unbleached shoemaker's thread coated with beeswax. This will leave a 3/8" diameter hole. See Figure 5.

The top seam is now opened 39" on each side of the base of the tie flap. A gore (a triangular piece of material inserted to give a varying width to the material) is sewn into each opening using a flat seam. It may have to be done by hand. Allow 1" all around for the seam. The finished gore should measure 39" x 39" x 7". This makes for a better fit around the poles. See Figure 6.

To aid in making your tipi more weathertight, add extensions to the base of each smoke flap. Sew the extensions with a flat seam. Allow 1" for hemming. The finished extension

should measure 8" x 24". These extensions are not Sioux, but they are very worthwhile. See Figure 3.

Two pole pockets are made by sewing together three layers of canvas. Attach them to the outside top edge of each smoke flap. See Figure 7.

Now sew four tapes. Two are 3' long and will attach to the tie flap. Two are 18" long and attach to the smoke flaps. Make them by folding together a 3" wide strip of canvas into a 1" band three layers thick stitched down each side.

The tape at the base of the left smoke flap is sewn to the top side of the hem. The tape on the right side is sewn on the underside of the hem.

Buttonhole stitch a small hole in the corner of each smoke flap or in the extensions if you used them. Attach a 3/16" cord 16' long.

Reinforcing is necessary in areas of great stress. Do this by cross-stitching four layers of canvas. Sew 3/16" cord around the tie flap and along the top edge of the smoke flaps. Use the same shoemaker's thread you used for buttonholing. Sew over and over.

It is not essential to hem the bottom of the tipi, but we preferred to give it the extra finish. Then sew stake loops at the bottom every couple of feet.

## The liner

If you can afford it, 8-ounce canvas is the best material for the liner. We used muslin because it was half the price and it works just fine. Whatever you use, the liner must be waterproofed. *The Tipi Book* mentions waterproofing with paraffin, but when I called Gladys Laubin (the author) to ask about that, she strongly recommended against it because of the flammability. It would have been a cheap way to waterproof, but we decided to buy waterproofing instead.

To make the liner, you will need 15 panels each 6' long, 34 3/4" wide at the top and 48 3/4" wide at the bottom. You could use 72" material or sew two

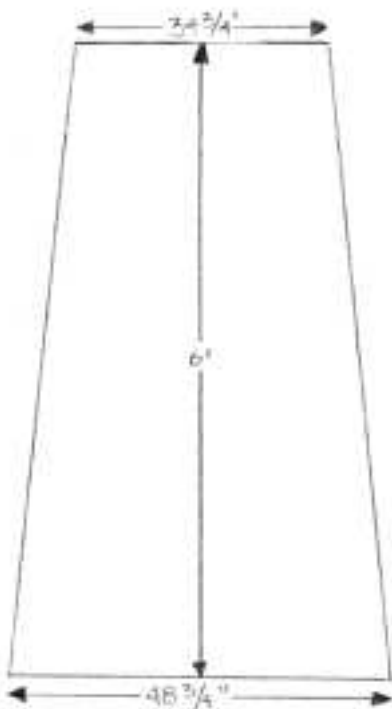


Figure 8

lengths of 36" material together using a flat seam. The best deal we found was 40" material, so we sewed two of those together, making our liner a bit higher. See figure 8.

To aid in cutting panels, make a jig on plywood. Hammer headless nails into the plywood to the right measurements. Impale the cloth and snap two chalklines. Cut. Don't do this barefoot.

Flat seam the panels together. Hem the top and bottom. Sew a reinforcing patch to the top and bottom at each seam.

## Pitching

The Plains Indians pitched their tipis with the door facing east. The principle reason was to have the back of the tipi toward the prevailing winds, which were from the west. An added advantage was that the door faced the rising sun. In the mountains, however, tipis were set up with their backs to the prevailing winds, whatever that direction might be. Our tipi faces slightly east of north with its back toward the wind that roars up the valley.

Choose a flat, open, well drained area where no trees will be hanging over the tipi. Trees attract lightning, drip long after rain is over, and sometimes blow down.

The base of the tipi is egg-shaped, not round, and it appears to lean backward. The placement of the poles is difficult at first, so be prepared to put it up and take it down several times before you get it right. We had a problem with one side looking very good and the other side very wrinkled. Just keep working at it.

Choose your four sturdiest poles. Three will form the tripod and one will be the lifting pole. Spread out the tipi cover and lay your tripod poles on it. This will determine the tie points. Allow the butts to be four to seven inches below the canvas, since you want the tipi four inches above the ground. Mark the poles where



*Choose a flat, open, well drained area where no trees will be hanging over the tipi.*

they cross so you'll know for next time. We had a lot of trouble getting this right. If it isn't, your canvas won't fit properly. The tie point of C is higher than on A and B. If it isn't, the tipi will not have the correct tilt.

You'll need 45' of ½" rope. Take one end and tie the three poles with a clove hitch. Wrap the rope around four times and then tie two half hitches. Lay the butts of poles B and C where they will be when the tipi is pitched.

Have a helper hold the free end of the rope to help lift the poles into place. Walk under the top ends of A and B, lifting to almost vertical. Swing pole A into position. The poles are now locked together.

Set the next eleven poles into place exactly in this order: 1, 2, 3, and 4 go into the front crotch on the right side. Then 5, 6, 7, and 8 go into the front

crotch from the left side. Next, 9, 10, and 11 go into the back crotch. Be sure to leave a space for the lifting pole.

Take the rope outside the frame at B. Wrap it around the poles four times, clockwise at the tie points. Move out quite a way from the poles to get the rope wrapped up where it belongs. It may be necessary for your helper to push the rope up occasionally with a stick.

Bring the rope back in over pole A. This will be your anchor rope and will be attached to a peg driven two feet into the ground. This is supposed to keep the tipi stable in strong wind. We've had 50 mph winds, however, and the tipi has been very stable without anchoring. We did use it at first, but found the rope to be in the way and have not used it since. You may

want to for safety's sake. You should at least have it ready, just in case.

Lay the lifting pole onto the cover and down the center. Leave several inches at the butt below the canvas as before. Mark where the pole crosses the tip of the tie flap. Remove the pole.

Fold the outside edges of the canvas in so that the lacing pin holes meet at the center. Now fold each half over and over until you have a triangle on each side with a base of about two feet. Fold the triangles together. Lay the lifting pole beside the canvas with the butt at the base. Tie the tape to the pole where it was marked by crossing them over and around the tie flap several times. We had trouble here too and had to remeasure and retie.

Lift the pole with the canvas, set the butt in position and drop the pole into the rear crotch. Be sure to keep the canvas on the outside.

Unroll the canvas to the front. Tie the tapes together at the base of the smoke flaps. Insert the lacing pins, which are traditionally made of chokecherry twigs, left side over right. Insert your two small smoke flap poles with rounded tips into the pockets of the smoke flaps. The poles should be long enough that they hold the flaps tight when they cross at the back of the tipi.

Move the smoke flap poles around enough to loosen the flaps. Push out the tipi poles against the cover but not too tightly. Peg down the front, then the back, then the sides. Now push the pole tightly against the corner.

Hang the liner. Here again you may have to redo it. We did. You want the end panels at the doorway so that they can be tied across for cold or blustery weather.

Attach a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " cord to each panel with 6" on each side. Or you can use the pebble and string method. To do that, find some smooth pebbles about an inch or so in diameter. Put the pebble in the cloth at the place you wish to attach a cord. Wrap the cord

around the material encompassing the pebble and tie off.

The lower cords are located 8" from the bottom of the material, thereby allowing enough material to pass under the ground cloth. We used the pebble and string method here because we weren't sure where the cords would be needed to make the liner nice and tight.

Stretch a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " rope tightly from pole to pole. Wrap it around so that it runs inside the poles instead of next to the cover. Tie the liner to the rope. Each panel coincides with a pole. Tie the bottom to the tipi poles or to separate stakes or both.

If you have a problem with water dripping from the poles where the rope is tied, put two little sticks against the pole and under the rope to direct the water down the pole.

To make the door, take a scrap of canvas or sew two together. Measure the doorway of your tipi. Allow plenty of extra for the seam and for overlap. We didn't make ours big enough, even though we thought we had allowed quite a bit. Sew a loop at the top and another at the bottom to attach to the lacing pins.

Cover the ground inside the tipi with plastic or some other moisture barrier, which is then topped with rugs or skins.

My husband and I lived in our tipi for four months until the winter solstice. It stayed very cozy. With the long nights (we have less than six hours of sunlight), I have to admit it became a bit confining, but it was warm, comfortable, and beautiful.

When the temperature dropped to around zero, we filled garbage bags with straw and put them between the cover and the liner along the ground. That proved to be all the insulation we needed. You could entirely fill the space if you wanted.

We had a stove in our tipi, but if you have an open fire you'll have to provide for a draft. We kept the smoke flaps tightly closed after it got

cold, but you can only do that with triple wall pipe. With the triple wall, you can wrap the flaps right around the pipe.

Our only problem was a couple of times in heavy rain and strong wind when we had an amazing amount of dripping. It was quite disturbing during the night. Some of the dripping was from the poles due to imperfections, but some was from the anchor rope and the tie strings of the liner, even though we had the little sticks in place. After it got cold, that inconvenience faded.

I hope you will find these instructions relatively easy to follow. It's a big project, but if you take it one step at a time it is manageable. If you're not working under a deadline it can be a lot of fun, but one way or the other it will provide you with a beautiful, inexpensive, movable home.  $\Delta$

# Yurt magic

...building an enchanting instant house

By Claire Wolfe

I awoke last night to a circle of moonlight reflected on a wall. It was so vivid I could almost see the dark-and-light patterns of the moonface in the reflection. The light poured down from a skylight onto a curved expanse of pure white cotton and pale wooden lattice strips. A breeze blew and I could hear the walls moving softly, comfortingly. I looked out floor-to-ceiling windows into the forest and was content.

This is a typical moment of life in a yurt—a practical and magical structure.

A yurt may be for you if:

- You want a temporary place to live while building a home—a place that can later be turned into an elegant and atmospheric art studio, guest house, meditation chamber, spa room, picnic shelter, playhouse, or workshop
- You've got property that's hard to access with conventional building materials (an unassembled yurt can be floated in by raft, helicoptered in, hauled by horses, or driven to your property in one or two pickup loads)
- You have a seasonal property and want a structure you can take apart and store for part of the year, safe from vandals, bad weather, and off-season maintenance costs
- You like to feel close to nature while still being comfortably sheltered
- You want an inexpensive out-building that's environmentally friendly and doesn't look trashy



*My yurt came with three separate roof layers; an inner liner of cotton canvas, an insulation layer made of plastic "bubble" material, and the roof skin itself.*

I haven't forgotten my fellow Outlaws, either (although this article is somewhat different than my usual sort). A yurt is especially good for us because:

- It's inexpensive enough to let you own a home without bank mortgages. You can set up a yurt for under \$10,000. (Prices, including optional features, range from about \$5,000 to \$15,000, with a few thousand more for flooring, heat, and other necessities.
- If you buy from out of state, or within a state that has no sales tax, no government extortionists will profit off you.
- Because it's not a permanent structure, a yurt also probably won't increase taxes on your property. (But check for yourself.)

- With a yurt, you have the flexibility to relocate quickly, taking your home with you.

## What exactly is a yurt?

A yurt—based on the traditional Mongolian nomad's hut—is a circular, peak-roofed dwelling with a wooden lattice wall. The roof consists of a large central ring with radiating rafters. Rafters and lattice wall are tied together by a cord that bears a remarkable responsibility for keeping the structure intact. The entire thing is then covered by a flexible skin.

In modern U.S.-manufactured yurts, skins are usually polyester-canvas or vinyl. High-tech insulation is an option (and a must for year-round living in most climates). The cord that holds the walls to the rafters is aircraft cable. The roof ring supports a skylight, or sometimes an outlet for a central chimney. Big, vinyl, detachable windows cover built-in screens.

Yurts may be up to 30 feet in diameter (around 730 square feet). They can be partitioned into rooms or left as one open living space. You can link two yurts together with a docking unit, or link a yurt to another building. Most are manufactured as kits, to be erected by you and your friends.

## Me and my yurt

I had hoped to buy a 24-foot (450-square-foot) yurt. But when a used 18-foot model became available at a good price, I jumped at it, even though I feared it would be uncomfortably small. I was happily surprised. Because there are no wasted corners, that 263-square-foot (or rather, round foot) space gave me two years of comfortable living with room for my computer, futon, rocking chair, a kitchen area, a small bathroom, and beds for three large dogs. It now serves as an office and guest room, complementing a cabin not much larger than the yurt itself.

My yurt is ideal for year-round use since it features heavy-duty materials and an (optional) panel wall system that enables me to change the position of windows and walls to catch

the light at different seasons, equalize the effects of weathering, add or remove a window, or easily replace a damaged section of skin.

But before my used bargain came along, I'd long been admiring the works of Pacific Yurts of Cottage Grove, Oregon ([www.yurts.com/](http://www.yurts.com/)), the original U.S. yurt maker. They create a versatile, high-quality, affordable product, which has the advantage of having more have-it-your-way options than any other. And they have excellent customer service, as well.

You can get a list of suppliers by entering the terms "sustainable architecture" and "yurt" into an Internet search engine. Or you can build your own yurt from scratch—which is what my neighbors did to create a home schoolhouse for their children. But I was glad to have the finished parts, instructions, and ready advice from the manufacturer.

## Erecting the yurt

Setting up a yurt is simple. Once you know what you're doing, you and two or three friends can erect a 30-foot yurt in two days, and a smaller yurt in a single day. It took me and

one helper about 12 hours, with neither of us having any prior experience.

But first, you've got to have a deck or some other type of flooring. Everyone who's ever built a yurt will tell you that's the most time-consuming part.

Yurt makers will supply you with free deck plans and materials lists. Or they'll consult

with you about other types of flooring. The main thing to know is that your flooring or deck must be designed for the yurt you purchase, because each manufacturer has different size requirements and its own system for tying down the lattice walls and skin.

If you plan to move your yurt from place to place, you might want to make a portable deck—perhaps as a series of wedges that can be bolted together. My helper and I constructed a deck from the manufacturer's specifications. These specs made a deck that I swear is sturdy enough to drop from an airplane. If I were to do it again, I'd go for a lighter, more portable deck.

## Construction

Each brand of yurt has a slightly different sequence of construction, but all are similar. With mine, we first bolted the door frame onto the edge of the deck. Then we assembled the lattice wall (which may come in two or three sections) and fastened it to one side of the door frame. As if stretching a baby gate across a doorway, we walked the lattice around the edge of the deck, fastened it to the other side of the door, then anchored it to the deck with metal brackets.

Spreading the lattice wall is probably the most fun part of the project. But because that big, wooden accordion is floppy, this is one step where it helps to have at least three people to keep it stable.

After that, I looped a circle of aircraft cable around the upper part of the wall. (It rests on spacers within the top "X" of the lattice.) The low ends of the rafters will notch onto this cable. My helper nailed a thin plywood strip around the bottom of the wall for appearance and weather protection. (On a Pacific yurt, this strip would be wider and the skin would attach to it.)

Next come the skylight ring and rafters. The ring has a series of holes



*Every piece of my yurt fit into a small pickup truck. In the above photo you see the rafters on the bottom, then the lattice wall sections, the door unit (the sill is visible), and on top of everything, the skylight. Insulation panels and wall sections served as cushioning. Various hardware rode up front with me as I headed for my construction site.*

encircling it. The upper ends of the rafters attach to the ring via pins inserted into the holes. The most intuitive way to raise the skylight is to “skewer” the ring with three or four strategically placed rafters, then have several friends hoist the assembly into the air until they can affix the lower ends of the rafters to the aircraft cable. At that point, you’d insert the remaining rafters. That’s the way you do it with some yurts.

The manufacturer of mine, however, strongly recommended tying the ring into place atop scaffolding and only then begin attaching rafters. That’s because their skylight ring is heavy and quite a work of art. You wouldn’t want to risk dropping it. But it wasn’t easy. Using the scaffolding, you must place the ring at exactly their proper height and position or the rafters will balk when you try to insert their pins into the ring.

My yurt came with three separate roof layers: an inner liner of 100 percent cotton canvas, an insulation layer (R-15) made of plastic “bubble” material sandwiched between aluminumized outer covers, and the roof skin itself, a single unit made of tough vinyl fabric and weighing about 75 pounds.

One by one, with the liner first, we lifted these up through the skylight

and spread them over the rafters. The outer skin was bulky and hard for two people to maneuver. This is another step at which three or four strong friends could be helpful. But even with some struggle, two of us managed to get the entire roof on in only about two hours.

Next you can tie a rope to the skylight and, while standing inside the ring on a ladder or scaffold, pull it up the side of the yurt, across the roof and into place, where it reattaches in seconds.

Finally, the walls. And they were a breeze.

Inside the drip-edge of the roof skin is another small metal cable. Wall insulation and wall skin simply clip to it and hang down, as if from a clothes line. My walls came in two layers; this time the inner cotton liner was built into the insulation panels (also R-15). With my yurt’s panelized system, I simply lifted the outer skin into place section by section, clipped it over the insulation, zippered the panels together, and closed big, weather-protecting velcro flaps over the zippers.

Once the skin was on and battened down to the sides of the door frame, all that was left was to tighten it around the bottom. In this case, that meant pulling a drawstring. With

another design, you might screw the skin down through grommets.

Voila! A finished yurt.

As with any structure, you’ll need to decide on the type of plumbing, electricity, heat, and cooling you want.

Yurts lend themselves naturally to off-grid

options like self-contained composting toilets and rainwater catchment systems (which Pacific Yurts, among others, offers). Wood stoves or pellet stoves will heat them efficiently. (You can order your kit with the needed flashings). Tankless water heaters work well in the limited space. And electric outlets can be set into the floor or installed on posts, or you can snake an all-weather extension cord under the walls from an outside box.

## Some thoughts on yurt living

In a yurt, you’ll hear every raindrop, every breeze, every bird call and coyote howl. In high winds your yurt will rock and creak like a wooden sailing ship in a gale. Yet, while reacting strongly to every weather change, yurts handle weather brilliantly. I was inside one day when a 100-mph wind gust hit. The lattice wall swayed. My desk rolled backward, books tumbled from atop a filing cabinet. But when I checked for damage later, I found only that the drip-edge of the roof had harmlessly flipped up—something I could have avoided by using the built-in tiedown loops. The roof and walls have never leaked, even in the worst rainstorm. The roof has never bowed under snow. And I’ve had only minor, fixable problems with cold and moisture penetrating around the bottom. If you’re living in areas of truly extreme conditions, wind and snow reinforcing kits are available.

The yurt is at its comfortable best when it’s 40 to 70 degrees F outside. But people happily use yurts in the high Rockies and Arizona deserts. You need to be sure you weatherize and heat or cool the yurt for your climate. Double insulation layers may be an option. A door that swings inward is a plus in a snowy climate, and you should check whether this is standard or optional on any yurt you’re interested in.



*The finished yurt can have many of the amenities of modern living including electricity and plumbing.*

The outer wall of a yurt isn't usually very tall—6'2" on mine. Because of the sloped roof, this has never been a problem. If you're much over 6-feet, though, you may want to look into "tall-wall" and full-height door options. Short of that, make sure to build your entryway so that you have a step up to your door; this will help avoid bumped heads.

Get a skylight that's openable, not fixed. I can't tell you how important that is to airflow and cooling on hot summer days. The skylight is a big feature of yurt living, both for utility and beauty, and you'll probably spend many hours admiring and appreciating it.

When you first begin looking at yurts, they all seem similar. But the difference is in the details. Check the thickness of the rafters, the weight of the fabrics and the window vinyl. Look carefully at the finishing details and the various hardware and connectors. Make a list of what's optional and what's standard. Examine the quality of the wood and other materials, and what's natural and what's synthetic. Get to know yurt vendors and yurt dwellers. Ask questions. Suddenly what looked like a basket of identical apples seems filled with oranges, quinces, and pomegranates. The yurts are that different.

No one really knows how long these manufactured yurts will last, since they haven't been made that long. The oldest company, Pacific Yurts (est. 1978), has reports from customers whose 18-year-old yurts are still in fine shape. But a more realistic design life is probably 10 to 15 years, and that will vary depending on your use (or abuse) and climate.

Make your choice carefully, treat your yurt well, and you can enjoy many years of moonlight, breezes, and inexpensive, independent living in a structure that's magical in its pleasures. Δ

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# HERE'S HOW WE BUILT OUR STRAW-BALE HOUSE

By Dawn Schatz

“**W**hat about the Big Bad Wolf!” Everyone asked, and I do mean everyone. After the predictable jokes about wolves blowing down our house, my husband and I introduced family and friends to the economics and simplicity of straw-bale houses. Owner/builder straw-bale houses can be built for as little as \$5 to \$20 per square foot. By incorporating salvaged material with straw-bales, we built our modest two-story 1400-square-foot house for \$9.50 per square foot, excluding plumbing, drywall, and interior finish. Initially, the cost comparison between conventional construction and straw-bales sparked our curiosity. After further research, the accolades from owner/builders convinced us to build our first house out of straw.

After cost, the most significant selling point for us was the potential insulation value of R-50, two to three times higher than typical fiberglass insulation. Lastly, the idea that our building material would be both renewable and sustainable suited our lifestyle and values. Of course, it would have been better had we been able to grow the straw ourselves.

Building with straw-bales raises a few common concerns that need to be

addressed concerning fire, moisture/mold, insects and pests, insurance, building codes.

Straw-bales are compacted so tightly that very little air is able to pass through, impeding the combustion process. The two-hour fire rating is excellent, much higher than conventional wood-framed houses. Loose straw that is sometimes used to fill

snow, so a moisture barrier should be used to protect the bales.

Rice, wheat, and barley straw all have their seeds removed before baling, at least in theory, so there is no food attraction for rodents. The bales are tightly fitted together, discouraging nest-building, and once the bales are sealed with stucco, there is no entry for insects or rodents.

Insurance companies are very receptive to straw-bale houses, once the fire safety concerns are alleviated. There is plenty of documented evidence from straw-bale books, research centers, and the like available for reference.

Building codes in some areas can make alternative construction such as straw-bale houses challenging and fraught with red tape. A game of creative semantics often helps, such as changing the description of the house from “straw-

bale in-fill” to “one to three-foot thick, wire reinforced, concrete walls.”

## The in-fill method

When building a straw-bale house, it's important that a significant amount of time be spent planning, since dry straw isn't always available year-round. We live in the Idaho Panhandle, where snow and rain played a major role in the timing of



*We used the in-fill straw-bale method, where the bales provide walls and insulation, but don't provide structural support for the roof.*

between bales (or as ceiling or floor insulation) is more vulnerable to fire, so it should be treated with a fire resistant material such as borax before it is inserted.

Although there isn't enough oxygen to induce combustion, there is enough oxygen exchange to allow the walls to breathe, reducing the risk of moisture and subsequent mold growth. The top and bottom are most vulnerable from driving rain, wind, and

our project. The building season is very short, and rain and snow come early. Partly because of this short time span, we chose to use the in-fill method where bales provide walls and insulation, but don't provide structural support for the roof. In-fill walls rely on traditional 2 x 6 framing, unlike load-bearing straw-bales, which support the weight of the roof.

Load-bearing straw-bale houses are much faster to erect, more simple, and usually less expensive, but they also require precautions in planning and design that require special care and attention. The bales need about seven weeks for settling—mechanical compression—to occur. In-fill houses allow greater flexibility in design, multiple levels, greater roof span, and larger window and door frames. By using the in-fill method, we were able to incorporate an aesthetically pleasing post and beam structure, with all the advantages of using straw-bales.

## Construction

Because our property lies in a Plan "B" flood plain, which means there is a potential for flooding every 500 years, we built our house on 18 cement piers 2 feet tall, rather than pour a slab foundation. This alleviated our need for a vapor/moisture barrier underneath the straw-bales. A moisture barrier is absolutely neces-

sary when the bales come in contact with concrete because concrete wicks moisture up from the ground. Manufactured floor trusses provide the framework for the first floor and hand-cut posts are used to support the roof trusses. The floors actually extend 18-inches past the posts to accommodate the straw-bales.

Windows must be secured within the bale wall and need only be designed strong enough to support the bales overhead. Ours are self-supporting, held in place by 2 x 6s and reinforced with plywood, so that windows would not be affected by gradual settling of the bales. Downstairs, the window frames were secured at the floor and extended to the second floor. Upstairs, the window frames were hung from the roof trusses and secured down to the floor.

All of our window framing was designed to be flush with the exterior straw-bale wall, creating an interior space for plants or a window-seat instead of being recessed.

Recessed windows and doors can create a moisture trap due to their design, so a moisture barrier is needed on



*The post and beam skeleton*

top of the bales directly below the openings. The majority of our windows were beveled to allow a better view of the surrounding mountains. This requires extra time and patience because each bale that abuts the window must be altered and shaped accordingly. A disadvantage of beveled windows and subsequent bale modification is that the newly created bale is less compact and less stable, thus needing extra support.

Because I was more comfortable with the smooth, flat interior walls obtained from drywall rather than the more common stucco interior of most straw-bale houses, we had to create a surface to secure the plasterboard. We used 1 x 4 furring strips nailed to the outside of the posts, so these had to be installed before the bales were stacked. They were also used to secure bales for increased stability.

## Bales

The first set of straw-bales we tried to obtain were last year's crop and hadn't been protected adequately, so they were wet and moldy. After waiting for the summer's crop of barley straw, we obtained 330 two-string bales (16H x 18W x 42L) at one dollar a bale.



*Starting at corners, we placed bales flush with the edge of our floor. It is like brick-laying.*

To stabilize the bales, we placed 4-foot long, vertical all-thread, (drilled through the floor and secured with a washer and nut on both ends) approximately 4-feet on center. Starting at a corner and working towards the middle, the 65-pound bales, (flat on their wide side) were centered, and impaled directly over the all-thread, and forced to the flooring. The bales are flush with the outside edge of the floor.

End to end they were placed as tightly as possible against each other without throwing the abutting bales off alignment. Starting at the corners allowed us to work with full bales as long as possible, since using full bales increases the strength and stability of the wall. The second layer of bales were staggered evenly over the first layer, overlapping the joints much like brick laying. Since the all-thread extended four feet, it secured the second layer as well, but the subsequent layers were pinned with rebar whenever possible. We tried to keep the corners as flush as possible, thinking we could smooth out the irregularities with stucco later on. Instead, the "bumps and dips" grew on us and we ended up accentuating



*Bales go up, working with whole bales as long as possible. Notice the window frames.*

the rough corners rather than hiding them.

### The bale needle

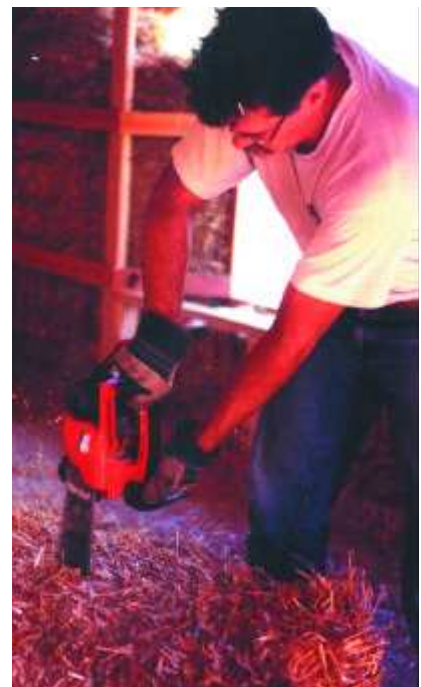
Since alteration of the straw-bales is a must at some point, a special tool is needed to accomplish this task. We designed ours after a similar one in the book, *The Straw Bale House* by Athena and Bill Steen and David Bainbridge. We created the "bale needle" from a small, (1/2-inch) 30-inch rod with one end flattened and sharpened to a point, and the other bent at a 90 degree angle for a handle. The sharpened end has one 1/4-inch hole drilled into it for threading the twine used to restrung the bale. When a bale is modified, the bale must be restrung before the original twine is cut. After careful measurement of the required modifications, twine is threaded through the hole in the needle. The needle is pushed through one end of the bale—top to bottom—directly next to the string that will be cut. Then the twine is removed from the needle, while leaving the needle in place, and pulled so that

there is enough length to wrap around the new bale, then tied as tightly as possible. A second piece of twine is then inserted into the needle. The needle is pulled back in the opposite direction, again pulling enough twine to secure the second bale and then tied. This is repeated for the second string. The needle must never be twisted or turned from its original direction or the twine will be twisted together and the two new bales tied

together. The original twine is cut, revealing two distinct bales slightly less compact than the original. Another form of modification occurred when we needed to angle a bale to fit alongside our beveled windows. The bales needed to be restrung as well as cut and shaped. We shaped the bale using a handsaw, but switched to a light chainsaw for speed. Straw flew everywhere,



*Upstairs, furring strips will secure the plasterboard.*



*Charlie shapes bale with chainsaw for beveled windows.*



*Applying stucco—Notice the black felt and chicken wire.*

including into the chainsaw's air filter, which then needed to be cleaned every 3 to 4 cuts.

Pinning the straw-bales to maintain continuity involved driving four-foot, ½-inch rebar (vertically) with a sledgehammer through at least 3 layers of bales. We placed two 4-foot rebars in each bale, carefully avoiding gaps between bales, strings, and wire ties. This is an area which has been debated at great length over how many pins are necessary for sufficient stability; it is an area for overkill.



*Stucco is applied in layers from bottom to top. Felt surrounds the wood.*

Since the roof was already on, we were not able to pin the top layer of bales with rebar. These bales were primarily held in place with tie-downs by lacing light gauge wire through the bale strings and securing it to the furring strips. This was done in all areas where we were not able to use rebar; if the bales were too small, driving rebar would have moved the bale out of alignment rather than stabilizing it. All beveled window bales were tied down with wire, and one 3-foot piece of rebar was inserted into the layers. The squared window bales received vertical rebar and another 1-foot piece of rebar inserted horizontally through the window frame. This increased stability of the window frame to the wall.

Once all the bales were pinned or tied down, they were prepared for stucco. This included covering all the exposed wood around windows and doors with 15-pound felt. Stucco netting or chicken wire is used to increase the strength of the stucco, as well as provide a mechanical connection. We used chicken wire.

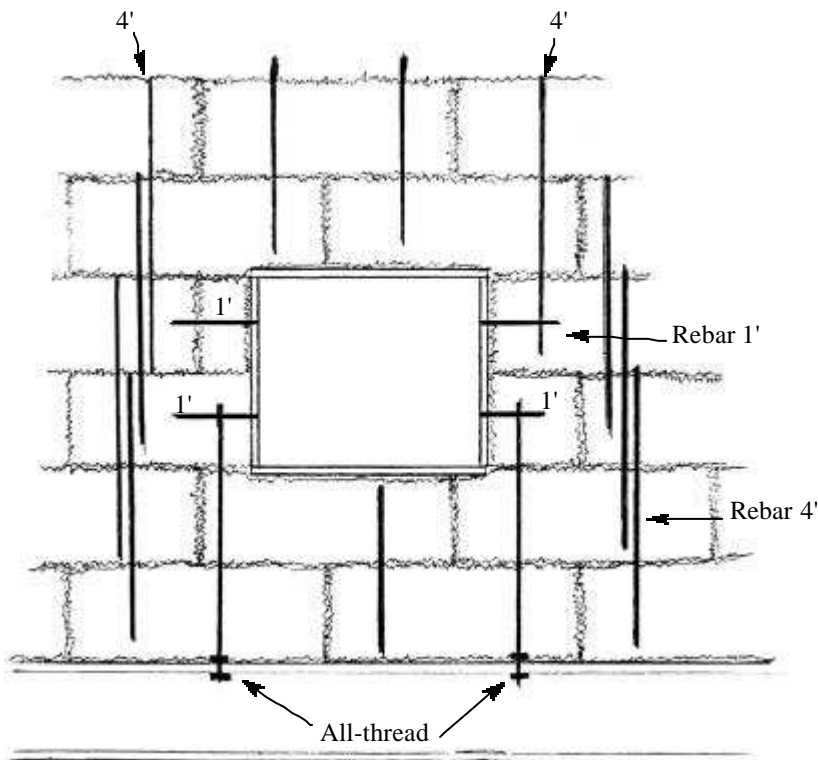
Metal lathe above windows and doors is necessary because it provides better adherence for the stucco. Some owner/builders of straw-bale houses have chosen to apply the stucco directly to the bales, omitting the chicken wire. This has worked well, but requires more stucco to cover the same area since the surface of the bales is so uneven.

The chicken wire must be pulled tight to the bales, so we devised a 10-inch pin from a heavy gauge wire.



*First coat of stucco is complete.*

The ends were bent at a 135-degree angle. When inserted through the straw, the angled end caused enough resistance with the straw to hold the chicken wire to the bale along with the weight of the stucco. We used these pins generously, stuffing holes and gaps between bales with loose straw as we went along. This is another debatable issue, especially in cases where there is a significant gap between bales, which creates a huge pocket of space. Filling it with loose straw makes applying stucco easier and more even, but less stable. Whereas, filling the entire gap with stucco requires much more material, is more costly, and has to be completed in steps, waiting for each layer of stucco to harden, then adding more.



*The bales were secured with all-thread and rebar.*

Both methods are time consuming but necessary.

## Stucco

Straw-bale houses can be sealed with a variety of materials depending on what's available locally. This is one area where the cost for enclosing and finishing the outside of a straw-bale house can be more expensive than conventional methods. We chose the most common cover, stucco, which is a combination of Portland cement, lime, sand, and water.

A three-coat application of stucco is recommended for most straw-bale houses, although some areas in the Southwest have used only two. Stucco can be applied by hand or sprayed on by a contractor for a fee ranging from \$1.50 to \$3 per square foot. We opted to do it ourselves.

The art of stucco application first requires the coercion of friends, family, and children to help. Otherwise the process takes forever. The first application is excruciatingly slow

because of the uneven surface area, and it's the one chance there is to even out those areas. Stucco should not be applied during weather extremes. It's important to keep the stucco moist until the curing process is complete, or cracking will result. Living in the Pacific Northwest, we didn't have to worry about lack of moisture.

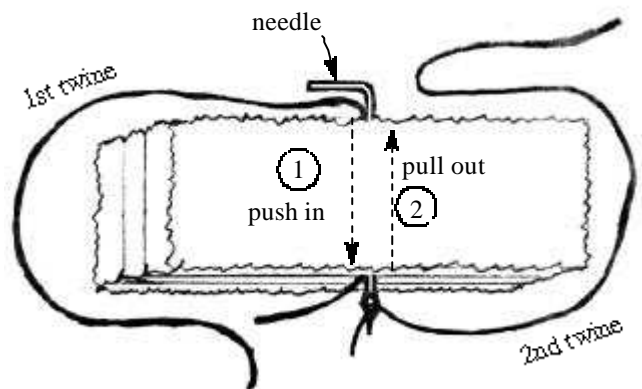
We elected one person to be solely responsible for mixing the stucco, while the rest of us plopped enough material on to our hawks so that we could lift and out-manuever the resistant material, sweeping it on to our trowels with a quick twist of the wrist, upward along the

bales from left to right. Sometimes, it was forced off the hawk with our hands and then squashed against the bales, especially where gaps occurred. Around windows and doors a small putty knife was used to "round-out" the area. Working around the house, from bottom to top, using ladders and scaffolding, we extended the stucco up to the roof line. Our four corners were also encased with stucco. Then, before the stucco hardened, it was raked lightly with a stiff brush to improve adherence of the second coat.

After the first coat is cured and hardened, usually around four days, the second coat can be applied in the same way as the first, but faster and easier.

## Plumbing and wiring

Although we moved into the house before the wiring and plumbing were complete, they need mentioning. Water is a straw-bale's worst enemy.



*When a bale is modified it must be restrung using a bale needle.*

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Water leakage from pipes can cause mold, rot, and degradation of the bale wall. Obviously, the plumbing shouldn't run through the bales, so we ran ours through interior walls and down through the floor trusses. This area will be insulated and enclosed.

Wiring needs special consideration to meet code. We attached the outlet and switch boxes to the furring strips, so that they weren't against the bales, and surrounded them with a fire-resistant material. However, Romex does run alongside the bales and through the floor trusses. Electrical codes differ from state to state, so this method might not be acceptable in other areas.

So what about that Big Bad Wolf? Just let him try! Δ

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# Get to know your herbs

By Alice B. Yeager

Culinary herbs are like neighbors. If you don't try to get acquainted with them, you'll never know their good side.

Some of the easy-to-grow herbs can turn ordinary recipes into gourmet items. Take garlic for instance. Garlic salt is about as far as some folks go when it comes to using herbs for seasoning. Ho hum. No desire for adven-

ture. Real garlic straight out of a garden makes garlic salt obsolete. If you have to be careful about your salt intake, check how much salt is contained in a bottle of garlic salt. If you have no fresh garlic source, try using garlic powder.

garlic    peppermint    basil  
lemon balm    catnip

## Garlic

In our own garden garlic grows abundantly—too much so at times. With the coming of cool fall days, garlic sends up its new leaves and by the time winter sets in it's easy to see the clumps of garlic scattered around.

*Sweet basil is easy to grow and gives plenty of leaves for drying or using fresh. Flowers and buds may be used in salads, but should be discouraged from developing as long as you want to continue harvesting leaves. All photos, James O. Yeager*



## 10 suggestions for using mints

1. Mix chopped mint leaves with softened cream cheese and spread on crisp crackers or whole-grain bread. For party sandwiches, use cookie cutters to create various shapes out of thin bread.

2. Grow some mints in decorated pots to give on special occasions—birthdays, door prizes, secret pal, etc.

3. Make a spread to use on biscuits or toast by chopping a cup of mint leaves and pouring just enough boiling water on them to wilt them. When this has cooled, stir in a cup of your favorite marmalade. (Orange marmalade goes well with mint.)

4. For a refreshing scent indoors in winter, grow some mint in pots in a sunny window.

5. Use a drop or two of mint flavoring in chocolate icing.

6. Fill a sachet with dried mint leaves and hang in your closet. Make several to tie on gifts.

7. Experiment with mint as there are any number of salads and other culinary dishes that benefit from chopped mint leaves. Try cooking some with fresh English peas and carrots.

8. Use mint sprigs to garnish deviled eggs, potato salad, slaw, etc.

9. Brew a refreshing herbal tea by infusing about an ounce of dried mint in a pint of water. If using fresh leaves, you'll need more than an ounce.

10. Earn some extra money by growing mint plants to sell at a roadside stand, nursery, or florist.



*Lemon balm should be processed as soon as possible after harvesting, as leaves have a tendency to turn black if left too long after cutting.*

## Chicken and rice

- 1 cup uncooked rice (not quick cooking)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. ground hot red pepper
- 1 tsp. dried sweet basil, or fresh leaves from 3 sprigs of sweet basil
- 1 tsp. dried lemon balm, or fresh leaves from 2 sprigs of lemon balm
- 1/2 cup celery, chopped
- 1/4 cup onion, chopped
- 1 medium-size fryer, or small hen, cleaned and cut in pieces
- 1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
- additional dried herbs, salt and black pepper (optional)
- 2 1/2 cups cold water

Place the rice in the bottom of a large casserole. Add the next six ingredients. Lay the chicken pieces on top of the rice and distribute the garlic slices on the chicken or in the rice. Sprinkle a pinch of dried herbs, salt, and pepper over chicken for more flavor. Gently pour water into casserole so as not to disturb seasonings on chicken. Bake, covered, for an hour at 375°F, or until rice has absorbed all water and chicken is tender. Serves 4 or 5 people depending on side dishes served with it.

During the cold season we snip off some of the strap-like leaves and use them fresh in soups, gravies, meat dishes, vegetables—you name it. Great taste and fine for one's constitution. We're in southwest Arkansas, Zone 8, where garlic leaves remain green all winter. In areas where ground freezes inches below the surface, folks don't have the luxury of fresh leaves unless they have a cool indoor place where they may grow garlic in pots.

When hit with a freeze, garlic leaves will wilt somewhat, but as soon as the air warms a bit, the leaves revive as

### Southern mint julep

4 sprigs fresh peppermint  
1 tsp. sugar  
cracked ice  
1½ jigger bourbon whiskey

Crush mint leaves and sugar together in a 12 oz. glass. Fill with cracked ice and add the whiskey. Stir until glass is frosted. Garnish with a sprig of mint. This is the basic Mint Julep enjoyed by the old plantation owners.

### Mint julep non-alcoholic

5 lemons  
1 bunch fresh peppermint  
1½ cups sugar  
½ cup water  
3 quarts ginger ale  
ice

Squeeze juice from lemons and strain to remove any seeds or pulp. Add lightly crushed mint leaves, sugar, and water and let stand 30 minutes. (Use a large stainless steel or glass bowl. Don't use aluminum.) Pour over a large piece of ice in a glass punch bowl and add ginger ale. Serve in small glasses. This is a recipe from the early 1900s.

though nothing had happened. With the coming of late spring and increasing temperatures, garlic will send up its tall seed stalk of tiny flowers clustered in a globular shape. These stalks are prized for use in dried floral arrangements. If you have an abundance of them, you might strike a deal with a local florist to purchase the dried stalks.

As summer progresses, the whole plant dies down and the bulbs may be dug. We like to remove any dirt, put the bulbs in a mesh bag and hang them somewhere convenient to the kitchen. If the garlic has not been bruised or cut during digging, the bulbs will easily last all winter. We never refrigerate them, as the scent is likely to invade

everything in the refrigerator including ice cubes.

Garlic is one of those herbs that will never help you win friends and influence people if you're the only one in the crowd who has eaten it. I know whereof I speak, as I was once an outcast from society during my sophomore year in high school. I had tasted some garlic at home and thought it tasted pretty good. Consequently, I proceeded to eat a clove or two with my meal. The first clue I had that something was amiss was when a classmate of keen scent asked rather indiscreetly, "What is that odor?" It didn't take long to figure out the source and I spent two days seated apart from the rest of the students.

Despite its negative social impact, garlic benefits the body in many ways. It aids the digestive system, cleanses the blood, and helps in cases of high blood pressure. It's also useful in getting rid of colds, sinusitis and the like. Garlic has a goodly amount of phosphorus and a fair amount of calcium, iron, potassium, and protein. Vitamins include B and C. If all of this isn't enough to its credit, garlic is also said to ward off evil spirits.

Concerning pets, especially dogs and cats, garlic is often used to eliminate intestinal worms. Just finely chop a small clove of garlic and stir it into their wet food. (They won't usually eat it with dry food.) This may save an expensive trip to the vet. Speaking of animals, if you don't want garlic tainted milk, don't let the family cow wander near your garlic patch as she's bound to avail herself of some nice tasty garlic leaves.

Many stories about garlic are recorded in history including the fact that garlic was always associated with the slave and working classes. Those folks grew quite a bit of it and consumed it raw as well as cooked. The aristocrats were more discerning. Nevertheless, guess who it is said to have had the highest rate of survival during some of the ancient plagues. The garlic eaters, of course.

There are lots of different kinds of garlic available to plant—*German*, *Chesnok Red*, *New York White*, *Silver Rose*, etc. The tops of *New York* and *Silver Rose* are especially suited for braiding. There's something very satisfying when one sees braids of garlic hanging near a cooking area, as you can almost always count on the chef being more than an ordinary fry cook.

Elephant garlic is a favorite of ours. It produces large bulbs, is milder tasting than some others, and produces well in the South. Garlic likes a fertile sandy loam soil with moderate moisture. Generally speaking, bulbs should be planted about two inches deep and four to five inches apart. Once established, garlic will form clumps and you'll find it will come back year after year if you leave a few small bulbs in the ground when you're harvesting. If you live where winters are severe, either protect your garlic patch with a heavy mulch or save some bulbs to replant in the spring. When selecting garlic varieties to plant, be sure to notice which ones are recommended for northern areas as well as those that do best in milder climates.

We like to plant garlic along the edge of the garden in spots we're not likely to use for anything else. Thus it can remain an undisturbed background type plant and not be in the way when we're starting our spring garden. We keep garlic free of weeds, as the unwanted can eventually crowd out the garlic.

### Peppermint

One of the most fragrant and easily recognized herbs is peppermint. Its flavor is everywhere—candy, chewing gum, jellies, teas, culinary dishes, medicine, potpourris, and so on. Hand-in-hand with it is spearmint. These two mints are probably the more prominent members of the mint family (*Labiatae*). They are both easily grown perennials requiring the same growing conditions—good soil, sunshine to partial shade, and moderate moisture. In our area, peppermint



*Minette or bush basil has small leaves and forms a low mound or globular shape. Good for growing indoors in winter.*

is the hardier of the two even to the point of being invasive and taking over the garden if not kept in check.

Peppermint produces seeds, but spearmint does not. However, both mints spread very easily by stolons or runners that form above and below ground. If you have a neighbor who raises mint, he/she will probably be glad to give you a start as most of us are constantly having to thin out our mint patches. These plants will also

propagate by cuttings being placed in water. Just cut off a woody stem about six to seven inches long, place it in a pint jar half full of water, set it in a cool place with plenty of light (no direct sunlight), and keep a check on it. In a few days tiny roots will begin to appear. When there is an abundance of roots, transplant the new plant to its permanent spot giving it some protection from direct sunlight until its

leaves have become accustomed to outdoors.

In the cooler states of the Midwest and Northwest, mint is grown commercially, yielding on the average of 50 pounds of oil per acre. After all, it takes a lot of oil to flavor the things we use that have a minty fragrance or taste. Long before the days of commercial use, the mints were highly regarded as strewing herbs. Branches of mint were spread across the floors of public places such as temples and churches and people bruising them underfoot caused the air to be cleared of any unpleasant odors.

Early settlers were the first to bring the mints to this country and, like so many other immigrant plants, they have escaped into the wild where they don't taste exactly like the original. Variations in flavor have come about through cross-pollination, but the plants may still be identified by their square stems with opposite leaves, minty flavors, and scents. The leaves of spearmint are oval shaped and almost stemless, whereas peppermint's leaves are more lance shaped with stems.

Our own plants have the true mint flavors and it's pure pleasure to chew some of their leaves while working in the garden. Try crushing a sprig of mint in a glass of iced tea and you'll have a wonderful new flavor. And, who hasn't heard of the famous Mint Julep? (See recipe and suggestions that accompany this article.)

We harvest our mints during spring before summer takes a toll and plants are at their best. Sprigs of mint are cut while the plants are dry and not wet with dew. We discard woody stems and any leaves that are imperfect. Leaves are placed on trays in an electric dehydrator and dried at a temperature of 95 to 100 degrees F. This usually takes about three days. When the leaves are crisp they are either crumbled by hand or pulverized with a blender and put in airtight jars for storage. Jars are labeled with names and dates.



*Holy basil is not as tall growing as sweet basil and has a delightful flavor and scent of its own. Purple flower spikes are pretty, but should not be allowed to develop as long as you are interested in harvesting leaves.*

## Basil

Another favorite culinary herb is basil. (Many people, including TV cooks, pronounce “basil” with a long “a.” Actually, it should be pronounced to rhyme with “dazzle.”) This is another member of the mint family having the same square stems and opposite leaves.

I believe we have used more different types of basil in cooking than any other leafy food herb. There are a number of basil varieties with distinctively different flavors—holy, cinnamon, lettuce leaf, lemon, sweet, etc. Sweet basil and lettuce leaf have about the same spicy flavor and fragrance, but the lettuce leaf (developed in Japan) produces three to five inch long leaves giving an advantage in size. The other basil varieties have smaller leaves. Green tossed salads get a boost when sweet basil leaves are included and this herb is also great to use with anything containing tomatoes including spaghetti

sauce. Chicken and Rice is a favorite recipe at our house and sweet basil plays a part in it.

We like to dehydrate basil leaves following about the same procedure as for the mints. However we harvest basil later in the growing season as it is a summertime crop.

The mound type basil, known mainly as minette or bush basil, has small leaves and makes a compact plant about 8 to 10 inches high. Flavor is a bit more delicate than sweet basil and minette’s size makes it suitable for growing in pots in a sunny window during winter.

Basil is an annual and must be started anew each spring. Plants are easy to transplant, so we start ours indoors in a heated seed starter about six weeks before our last frost date. When the ground has warmed up and we’re ready to plant most of our other warm weather plants, we transfer the basil plants to their spot in the garden. Before planting, we harden the plants off by giving them an hour or two of exposure to direct sunlight daily, gradually increasing the time until we’re sure there’s no likelihood of sun scald. Transplants are set about 10-12 inches apart depending on the mature size of the variety.

Seed may also be sown directly in the garden after soil has lost its spring chill, but there is more risk of losing seedlings to damping off, heavy rains, or marauding pests than when plants are started indoors.

Basil does well under the same growing conditions as most other garden plants. We always put down a thick organic mulch as summer advances, as this helps plants to remain in good condition over a longer period of time requiring less watering. Pinching out blossom stems will keep the plants producing leaves longer instead of going to seed. Basil is one of those fragrant plants that makes brushing against it a pleasure as its spicy scent immediately fills the air.

## Lemon balm

Lemon balm is another fragrant member of the mint family. It gives off a lemon odor, as its name suggests, when leaves are crushed. Its leaves are used for flavoring teas, soups, jellies,

### SOURCES FOR HERBS

**J. W. Jung Seed Co.**  
335 S. High Street  
Randolph, WI 53957-0001

**Pinetree Garden Seeds**  
Box 300  
New Gloucester, ME 04260

**Johnny’s Seeds**  
1 Foss Hill Road  
RR 1, Box 2580  
Albion, ME 04910-9731

**Park Seed Co.**  
1 Parkton Avenue  
Greenwood, SC 29647-0001

etc. We like to use it combined with basil to flavor meat dishes, spaghetti sauce, etc.

This herb is a perennial and once started will continue for years in its spot as well as scattering seed all over the place. The seeds germinate somewhat slowly, but make up for the slow start by growing quickly. I recommend starting these seeds indoors also.

Being a perennial, lemon balm will die down when a killing frost comes along, but will put on new growth early in the spring. Like most garden herbs, it requires good loamy soil and a sunny spot although it will also do well under some shade. On the average, these plants will grow about one to two feet tall and almost that wide, so they need ample space to do their best. Place young plants about 18 inches apart. They will soon fill in the open space.

Root divisions of a mature plant may be made during spring or fall by dividing roots and having three or four buds to each piece. If doing this in the fall, it should be done far enough ahead of frost to allow the plants to become established. Lemon balm will also root in water.

We harvest lemon balm several times in the spring before summer takes a toll and before plants begin to flower. We follow the same procedure as for drying other leafy herbs. Lemon balm leaves have a tendency to turn black if not processed within a few hours of harvesting, so it's better not to delay dehydrating them.

## Catnip

While we're looking out for ourselves, we also like to grow something for our pets, particularly those of the feline persuasion. The problem with raising catnip in our garden is that the cats can demolish a patch of catnip overnight. Therefore it has to be protected by putting poultry wire fencing around it as well as over it. In other words, we cat-proof the catnip patch.

Catnip tea was once a favorite among British tea lovers and an infu-

sion of catnip was also used as a tonic. However this herb, another member of the mint family, is best known for its effect on cats—big cats like mountain lions as well as domestic house cats. If they ever get a whiff of your catnip plants, they'll zero-in on them. You have to see catnip-loving cats to believe their antics.

Catnip, also called catmint, is a hardy perennial that may be grown from either seed or root division. It requires about the same care as for other leafy herbs in this article including a good mulch and plenty of moisture to survive hot summers.

If you want to do something especially nice for your cat(s), dehydrate some catnip for the winter season following the same drying procedure. (Lock out the cats until you can get the dehydrator going.) You might even like to create a toy by using a stout scrap of cloth sewn tight and stuffed with dried catnip. I can guarantee it will be a favorite playing.

Herbs mentioned here are but a smidgen of the list, but they all do well under our climactic conditions—fairly mild winters and hot, humid summers. As you branch out into growing and using herbs from your own garden, you'll discover a whole new way of seasoning. You may even win prizes and write a book. There's nothing like having a gourmet cook in the family. Δ

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# Start a post-construction cleaning business

By Dorothy Ainsworth

Wherever construction is going on, there will be a big mess left in its wake that somebody has to clean up. That somebody can be you, and you can make excellent money doing it. Cleaning only one sizable house a week can gross you \$2000 per month.

If you're the energetic type, in good physical shape, and a fussbudget about detail work, you're "da man" (or woman) for the job. You should be comfortable with ladders and heights, be willing to work long hours on short notice, and maintain a positive attitude and cheerful disposition. But most importantly, you must be dependable, even if you're a grouch.

Contractors are almost always in a pinch to meet deadlines (open-house showings, escrow-closings, etc.) and will be calling you at the last minute to clean a house. You'll have two or three days max to complete the job, no matter how large the place, and with subcontractors still underfoot making messes. (That's where the cheerful disposition comes in.)

To build a great reputation, you have to just do it, no whining allowed. You and you alone will be responsible for making the house presentable to sell, or if it's presold, making it turn-key ready for the new owner to move in—maybe Martha Stewart herself. It has to sparkle.

## Getting started

Check out some good books at the library on cleaning, and read up. The experts have a lot to offer in tips and advice that will help you look and feel like a pro, even on your first job.

Think up an original name for your business. Beware of borrowing anyone else's idea. You will need a name

you get caught. (The contractor who hires you can also be fined.)

A city license is nominal (under \$100 most places). Here in Oregon you also have to have a contractor's license to do post-construction cleaning. This requires renting and watching a set of videotapes, available from your local contractor's board. The nine-tape program addresses the legal

aspects of the business, not the technicalities of building. You then take a multiple-choice test and when you pass you are issued your contractor's license number, which you will use on your business cards and advertising.

The cost here in Jackson Co., Oregon is about \$250. Call the Construction Contractor's Board (CCB) under state listings in your phone book for specific info in your area. (Regulations are always changing.) The CCB will send you an application packet. Simply follow the steps. They want your business.

Bonding and insurance for one year is about \$500 (or less) depending on the amount of coverage you need (accident & liability) and is available either through the CCB or privately. They have a chart to determine your needs. Look under "Business Insurance"

in the phone book and call around for the best rates.

This may all sound complicated, but it isn't. Just pick up the phone and get started. Professional people are



*In your own post-construction cleaning business, cleaning only one sizable house a week can gross you \$2000 per month.*

(DBA—"doing business as") to apply for licenses.

The next step is to get licensed, bonded, and insured. This is the part none of us likes, but there's no way out unless you want to risk a fine if



*A good tool belt will carry the tools you will use most frequently in your post-construction cleaning business.*

exceedingly helpful. They will guide you through the process; they do paper work for a living. All you have to do is sign on the dotted line and give them a check. There's no mystery involved.

Now it's time to sit down with your "partner-in-grime" (if you have one) and dream up a business logo for your business cards and ads. Keep it simple; keep it cheap. It can be a simple sketch of a squeegee or broom. You don't have to hire a graphic artist unless you have money to spare. Print shops, like "Kinkos", have catalogs of sample illustrations you can pick from and lettering styles to choose from. They'll even help you design your card.

While you're at it, have them print up some flyers announcing that you are ready for business. Then look through the *Yellow Pages* under "Contractors" and send a flyer to each one. It'll add up to spending about 50¢ (envelope, stamp, flyer) per potential \$500 client. It's well worth the effort and expense.

You can also go around to construction sites, introduce yourself to the general contractors, and personally hand them a flyer and a business card. This, along with a handshake, is great PR, especially if you have a Jim Carey or Julia Roberts-smile. Keep in

mind that they will be taking a chance on you the first time around, so you might offer "satisfaction guaranteed" or something to instill their confidence in you. No good businessman likes to take a giant leap of faith without some convincing.

## Equipment and supplies

You're almost ready to start swabbing the decks—but you need a mop! Actually you need a lot of things, starting with a pickup truck or van or any vehicle that can carry a ladder. (I wouldn't recommend a motorcycle, although that might be a cute logo.) If you spent all your cash getting licensed, go down to the hardware store or janitorial supply house, open an account, and yell: "Charge!" like Teddy Roosevelt. Or use a credit card. Or borrow money from the proverbial "brother-in-law." With the profit from your first two jobs, you'll be able to pay off all your equipment and supplies. The rest of the year will be gravy.

### Bare-bones list of materials:

- 30-foot extension ladder, installed with a leg-leveler kit for uneven terrain (very important for safety)
- 6 to 8-foot step ladder
- 3 to 4-foot step ladder
- small or medium Shop-Vac (wet/dry type) for window tracks and heating ducts
- regular vacuum cleaner (upright or canister) with long hose attachment for stairs
- window cleaning tools (buy quality and cry only once).

Note: You can buy the special-

ized window tools you need from a janitorial supply, or order them from a catalog. (There is a huge list of supply houses on the Internet.)

- tool belt for window tools
- mop and mop bucket
- broom and dustpan
- plastic putty knife scrapers (1½-inch size is handy)
- toothbrushes
- bamboo skewer sticks (for tight corners)
- lots of soft cotton rags (Walmart sells 18 washcloths for \$5.00)
- rubber gloves (surgical-type is best)
- big soft-bristle scrub brush for showers and tubs
- *quality* spray bottle (again, buy the best)
- gallon of non-toxic cleaning solution (like "Simple Green")
- assorted cleaners for label removal, etc. ("Goof-Off", acetone, or non-toxic citrus cleaners)
- plastic buckets (Two medium-sized will get you started.)

The total of the above list is about \$850. Now you're ready to roll.

## The bid and the contract

Here in southern Oregon the going rate for post-construction cleaning is from 18¢ to 20¢ a square foot (referring to living space, not the garage). The higher end of the range is based on difficulty in cleaning, such as huge high picture windows, hard to reach skylights, the number of windows, complicated fenestration, extensive high ladder work (steep hillsides, etc.), and other architectural details that require extraordinary work.

In addition to the rate based on square footage alone, you may charge extra for anything that is unusually time consuming, beyond the normal procedures, such as excessive glue on

floor seams, paint overspray on window frames and trim, etc.

To simplify the paper work, your contract and bid can all be on one page, with a provision stating that when the bid is actually signed by both parties, it then becomes binding.

If you are a glutton for punishment you may offer to clean up the outside premises too, which may include dump runs. There is always a lot of scrap lumber to be salvaged if you want it for your wood stove or whatever. When in doubt, ask, but the contractor probably won't care; he just wants the place cleaned up.

The time to secure this extra work is when you make your initial contact with the head honcho. Ask to be called well in advance of the interior cleaning job, to do the exterior job. Before you write up your bid, also ask if he (or she) wants the garage floor included in the estimate. (The garage windows are automatically included.)

## Window cleaning technique

Perfectly cleaned windows are a priority for a successful business. You will be a great asset to the contractor if you can do it all when you give him a bid. It simplifies his life and saves him time and money to not have to call in another specialist. Contractors love that. The following advice is from a professional window cleaner. This same guy informed me that it's a misnomer to use the term window "washing" in the industry. He said if you want to get really pretentious you might call yourself a "vertical-silicon-surface engineer" who specializes in architectural fenestration. Back to reality. To avoid liability, examine all windows carefully in advance and report any scratches to the general contractor. Almost without exception window glass comes from the factory with a few blemishes, scratches, or anomalies—some even between the panes. They must

be noted ahead of time. It will be hard to go back later and say, "I didn't do it!" His furrowed brow and red face will reveal his skepticism. Proper blade technique must be emphasized because if you scratch a window it will have to be replaced. Even label removal can be risky with improper razoring. You and your reputation are at stake here. Practice on your own windows first. Cleaning windows is an acquired skill that requires enough practice to make it look like an art. Needless to say, do not use an inexperienced worker to help with the windows.

### The procedure:

1. Spray labels liberally with window-cleaning solution to soak and loosen them. Spray the tracks at the same time and let them soak while you're doing the window.
2. With a new razor, remove labels and other debris by using the scraper in one direction only. Dragging a razor backwards does not remove anything, but it can trap grit under the blade and scratch the window.
3. Spray the window again, wash it with a special window mop, then squeegee down or across in broad overlapping strokes, blotting the squeegee edge on a lint-free rag occasionally as needed.
4. Upon close inspection of your handiwork when finished, if you find any stubborn specks the squeegee didn't get, scrub them off with #0000 steel wool. (Only use the finest gauge.) Spray and squeegee again if necessary.
5. Wipe tracks until perfectly clean. Use a toothbrush and/or skewer stick to get into the corners. (Note: Cleaning the tracks can sometimes be the most time-consuming job in the house.)

There are several techniques and tricks-of-the-trade used by profes-

sionals. This article just scratches the surface—no pun intended.

## Standard house-cleaning procedure

1. Don your rubber gloves, but *carry* a dust mask and ear plugs with you.

2. Remove all window labels.

3. Vacuum window tracks.

4. Clean window tracks first, or as you clean the windows.

5. Clean windows inside and out, wiping errant drips off the tracks, frames, and sills as you go.

6. Vacuum all cupboards and drawers in the entire house. Remove bottom drawers and vacuum beneath. There will be sawdust in every corner; be *methodical* so you don't miss any.

7. With a bucket of cleaning solution and lots of soft clean rags, wipe, wipe, wipe every surface of every cupboard, drawer, closet shelf, bookshelf, door, baseboard, and windowsill in the house. Be sure to get the tops of doors, the molding, and trim throughout the house. Again, be methodical so no surface is skipped. Rinse rags often so you're not just spreading dust around to dry into fine powder. (Remember, Martha Stewart may be checking it with her white glove.)

8. Clean showers, tubs, basins, and toilets with a soft scrub brush and cleaning solution. If label removal is a problem, use acetone (first choice) and a plastic putty knife. For very stubborn label adhesive residue, you may have to experiment with "Goof-Off," lacquer thinner, methyl alcohol, or as a last resort, toluol (a serious solvent). Rinse all porcelain surfaces and polish them with a soft dry cotton towel. Polish all chrome fixtures until gleaming. Clean mirrors with your special window solution and squeegee. (Use this opportunity to look in the mirror and comb your hair; you're probably a mess by now.)

9. Mop bathroom floors and dry with a towel to a lustrous sheen, whether tile or linoleum.

10. Wipe and polish kitchen and utility room appliances and all counter tops. Use stainless-steel-spray-cleaner on stainless. Ammonia products (like "Windex") streak stainless steel and are a definite no-no on marble. Always read labels when in doubt. Scrub and polish the kitchen sink and fixtures.

11. Vacuum out all heating/cooling ducts by snaking the vacuum hose far down the ducts to suck up all the debris you can reach. This job is very important because when the system is turned on it can spew clouds of fine Sheetrock dust all over the house. (And smoke will come out of the contractor's ears.)

12. Vacuum all carpet in the entire house, using the hose attachment along wall edges and baseboard ledges.

13. Wipe tops of all electrical outlet covers. Micro-dust settles on everything. This special attention to detail will not go unnoticed by Martha's eagle eye.

14. Gently wipe chandeliers and light fixtures, or dust them with a lambswool duster. Vacuum the insides of sconce-type lights.

15. Clean all thresholds.

16. Damp-mop the kitchen floor. If the kitchen and dining area is hardwood, save this job for last, and mop as you back out of the room so the floor will remain unscuffed. Use a few drops of lemon oil in the mop water and wring the mop almost dry. This trick-of-the-trade leaves the floor with a flawless sheen.

17. Sweep and/or vacuum the garage if it was included in your estimate. Wipe off the water heater and any other dusty surfaces.

18. As a finishing touch (like Tinkerbell and her wand), leave a little vase filled with a bouquet of flowers (supermarket price) on the kitchen counter with your business card and a

congratulatory note, along with a "Thank you for your business." This gesture is well worth the \$10 for the goodwill it spreads around. You'll soon earn a reputation for being the best, and you'll have all the referrals you can handle, including repeat business for maintaining clean windows for the new homeowners.

## Hiring help

If you need to hire help I recommend you do it through a temporary-labor service agency. You pay the agency directly for the hours an employee works and they act as a surrogate employer, handling the payroll for you (federal and state taxes, insurance, workman's comp.). Of course they charge a fee and a one-time security deposit, but it's worth it.

When you are first starting out it's the easiest route to go because it's responsibility-free for you. The agency will even provide you with the manpower you need, satisfaction guaranteed. (If you aren't happy with who they send out, they'll immediately send a replacement.)

If you choose to pick your own help, they require your prospective employees to register with them in advance and possibly be screened with a drug test and background check (which is understandable since they are insuring them).

The agency issues you a timecard to fill out and send in upon completion of the job. Then they promptly send the employee a paycheck and bill you at the same time. At the end of the year they issue W-2s and spare you that grief too.

On average you can expect to pay from \$8 to \$12 an hour for help. After a trial period, if an employee proves to be an excellent worker, it would be wise to give him or her a raise. Good help is such an asset to your business and so hard to find (in any business), that it's just common sense to pay people what they're worth and keep their morale high.

Keep in mind you'll have to *train* your employees on-the-job to do the work *exactly* the way you want it done—fast and efficient as well as methodical and meticulous. You can't just turn 'em loose on the house and expect a miracle. It's imperative to type up a checklist so nothing gets overlooked. After the first house you'll know how long each chore should take, so make a note of that on your list also. From experience I've found that the average 2000 sq. ft. house takes a minimum of 20 hours to complete.

Someday, when your business grows to the point that you have crews of employees, you may want to incorporate and become the big-shot employer yourself. At that juncture you can drive around from site to site overseeing the worker bees, take coffee breaks, and hire a bookkeeper and an accountant. But for now your partnership with a friend or your husband-and-wife team, or just little ol' you working your glutes off, is the starting point.

If you are a conscientious person and a hard worker, there is no doubt you'll make it in this business. The economy is on your side right now with a building boom going on and low interest rates.

Seize the opportunity. Good luck. Δ



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# the *gee-whiz!* page

By O.E. MacDougal

## What happened to the Pre-Columbian Indians?

How many Indians lived in the Americas before Columbus landed? It's a question that has been debated by anthropologists and archaeologists for decades. Until recently, estimates had run as low as 1.15 million, but a younger generation of archaeologists and anthropologists have placed the figure at over 100 million.

It is a matter of historical record that Cortés and his band of 600 men "conquered" the Aztec Empire. But the latest theories hold it wasn't just Cortés's military genius, horses (he only had 16), and guns that prevailed, but that the Europeans inadvertently introduced diseases, such as small pox and measles, to which the populations of North and South America had little or no resistance. At least one archaeologist thinks 95 percent of the aboriginal population died within a few decades in what would have been the greatest series of plagues mankind has ever known.

Historical records show that even as late as 1614, when Europeans visited present-day New England, they left because it was too crowded. Yet, when the Pilgrims arrived just six years later, in 1620, they found the area largely unoccupied. We also know that when the Spanish explorer, de Soto, traveled along the Mississippi he encountered village after village. Along one 200-mile stretch of the Mississippi River, de Soto had found roughly 50 towns and villages. Yet, almost a century and a half later, French explorers visiting the same area found *not even one*. Where did the Indians go?

## How advanced were they?

Here are some more interesting facts about the pre-Columbian Indians:

The Aztecs had more accurate calendars than Europeans, their mathematics was sophisticated, and they were further along in fields such as agriculture than the Europeans. The Indians in what is present day Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio built earthen pyramids that were larger than anything the Egyptians built.

When Hernán Cortés arrived in the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlán he found a city larger than any in Europe and, unlike European cities of the time, which were ankle deep in filth, the streets of Tenochtitlán were clean. **The pristine wilderness?**

More interesting yet is what the environment may have been in the thousands of years before the Europeans arrived. At the end of the last ice age, the rain forests in South America were only 10 percent as large as they are now, and it was assumed that the spreading of those forests was the result of climactic changes with man having nothing to do with it. Today, many archaeologists believe there is evidence that a major part of the rain forests, along with the prairies of North America, were the creations of the Indians and that they did more to alter the face of their environment than the rest of humanity did until just recently. Ironically, the pristine pre-Columbian wilderness so many environmentalists demand we return to may in fact be an artifact, invented and manufactured by the original inhabitants of the two continents. As one archeologist said, what we view as works of God or Nature may, in fact, be gardens created by mankind.

The trees have not dwindled since Columbus's arrival either. There are more trees in North America, today, than there were when Columbus arrived.

**Ice:** On an uncomfortably hot day you find yourself in a sealed room. Which would you rather have resting on the floor in the middle of the room, a large block of ice or a refrigerator with the door open? You'd be better off with the ice. It will absorb heat from the room as it melts. The refrigerator does not actually cool; it transfers heat from the interior to the coils on the back of the unit. With its door open it's just moving the heat a few feet. In fact, with its motor running it's actually heating the room up even more.

The "north pole" of a magnet is called the north pole because, when suspended so it can freely point in any direction it wants, it will point north toward the earth's magnetic north pole.

Why does it point north? One of the first things children learn when they play with magnets is that "like poles" repel each other while "opposite" poles attract. Thus, if two magnets are brought together so that their north or south poles face each other, they repel each other; if the north pole of one is brought near the south pole of another, they attract each other. In the same way, the earth's north magnetic pole attracts the north pole of a magnet of an ordinary household magnet.

But wait a minute. This means that if the earth's north pole attracts our magnet's north pole, then one of them *must* be a south pole. And since the convention in science is that the north pole of our laboratory and household magnets is the "north pole," then the earth's magnetic north pole is actually a magnetic south pole.

# Ayoob on Firearms:

## Getting along with the cops

**Y**ou moved to the boon-docks to get away from it all. The noise, the stress, the smells of the city, all of that. You are “far from the mad-dening crowd.” Alas, you are also far from the emergency services: police, fire, medical. This is why a sound working knowledge of first responder emergency medical principles, and of fire prevention and first-responder firefighting, are all the more important when you live in a backwoods home.

The same is true in regard to police services, which is why this column has emphasized the responsible citizen’s ability to prepare himself or herself to hold the line against this type of life-threatening emergency until the designated professionals get there to deal with it, just as they would if the situation revolved around a fire or a medical emergency. However, in citizen/police interactions, there are dimensions that don’t normally take place with fire and emergency medical services.

If a possum gets run over by the side of the road at your address and there are bloodstains on the pavement that indicate something bleeding was dragged onto your property, a nervous passerby won’t call the fire department or the paramedics, they’ll call the cops. If you live in a state where wildlife on your property is your property and you shoot that deer that’s been raiding your vegetable garden, a flatland tourist may drive past at just the wrong moment. Having watched you murder Bambi, he’ll reach for his cell phone. The call will go to the fish and wildlife department, a law enforcement agency, and

the report will be that of a crime: poaching. You can expect a law enforcement officer to be coming by to investigate.

You’ve been target practicing behind your house, one of the small pleasures of rural living. Alas, the property nearest yours has just been purchased by someone acting out a movie title—*Escape From New York*—and like so many urbanites who flee to rural areas, he subconsciously takes with him all the values he is trying to get away from. He hears your gunfire, and frantically calls the police.

In short, there are any number of routine actions to which rural people are accustomed that can bring the attention of les gendarmes. Now, you must understand, your local police are not always treated the same as their other emergency services counterparts who run fire trucks and ambulances instead of patrol cars. The people who wave at a passing ambulance or fire engine may not wave at a passing police car, and if they do, they are less likely to be using all their fingers. As a result, cops tend to be even more cynical and untrusting of the world at large than firefighters and paramedics.

With that in mind, let’s look at a few things that can improve police/community relations. I usually talk about this to cops, with emphasis on how they can come across better to the citizens they serve. This is a refreshing opportunity to get to the other end of the communications line and talk to the citizens about their side of it.



**Massad Ayoob**

### When cops come to the house

**If we knock at night.** When you’re home alone in a remote place and there is an unexpected knock at the door, instinct almost impels your hand toward your defensive firearm. Please keep something in mind. The single person most likely to be ringing your doorbell at 3 a.m. is a member of the local constabulary. He has come to tell you something like: “At 2 a.m., we recovered your stolen car.” You didn’t know your car was stolen? That’s because it was ripped off at 1 a.m., and you went to bed before midnight.

If you answer the door cradling your 12-gauge shotgun, I can pretty much guarantee you that the evening is going downhill from here. It would be an excellent idea to have an intercom at the door that allows you to converse with someone on the

doorstep without actually having to open the door. This will greatly improve the safety of any kids, elderly people, or others unable to effectively protect themselves when home alone. It will also prevent something that looks like an armed confrontation from taking place between a just-awakened householder and a cop who is acutely aware of his vulnerability on solo patrol during midnight shift.

This is one reason I've never bought into the old conventional wisdom that "a handgun is no good for home defense, you want a shotgun." *Au contraire*. While you may certainly want a shotgun too, a pistol makes more sense when answering a late-night knock. A small one can be hidden in the pocket of a bathrobe and even a large one can be discreetly concealed in your waistband behind your back when you open that door and greet the unexpected visitor who turns out to be Officer Friendly. (There are also other reasons to use a handgun for this purpose. It leaves a hand free to carry a baby or guide an elderly grandparent to the "safe room" when a criminal actually is breaking into the place, and that free hand can also operate a flashlight, a light switch, or a cell phone, but that's a topic for another time.)

**When you call us.** Don't take to the country the "city value" that "if you call the cops and tell them it's murder, they'll come quicker." You don't like being lied to. Neither do we. You wouldn't believe how many people call 911 and report an armed robbery when in fact someone has pilfered or shoplifted something of minor value. When asked why they exaggerated, the answer is usually, "So you guys will get here quicker."

You need most of your fingers to count what's wrong with this approach. You become "the little boy who cried wolf," and when a bad thing really does befall you, your report will be less credible. You've just increased the chances that

whomever committed a crime against you will get away with it. His defense lawyer will be able to access all related reports with a "motion for discovery," and will find out that you exaggerated the nature of the complaint. This will taint your credibility in court when you testify against the perpetrator for his actual crime, and perhaps create enough of an element of reasonable doubt in the mind of the jury for the defense lawyers to win an acquittal.

The biggest danger of calling in a minor misdemeanor as a major felony is that it can get someone hurt or killed. Lights and sirens notwithstanding, we only exceed the speed limit when the common law principle of the doctrine of competing harms tells us that immediate danger to human life and limb outweighs the greater danger to the public of even an emergency vehicle going at faster than posted speed. This means that if someone reports a home invasion or any other violent felony, our people will respond "Code Three," which is basically as fast as is humanly possible.

Of course, this increases the danger of an accident. If it turns out that the high speed response to a citizen's call indicating urgent, deadly danger causes a tragic accident, the fault in the end lies with the person who called in the false complaint.

The converse mistake can also happen. A citizen awakens in the darkness of the night to realize that there is an intruder in the house. They call 911 and say, "I want to report a burglary," give their address, and hang up.

What's wrong with that picture? "I want to report a burglary" sounds like an after the fact matter. Yes, it's a serious felony, but it also doesn't demand immediate response. It may be some time before police get there to take a report and begin the investigation. If the bad guy is in the house, you want assistance there *now*.

If it really is an emergency, as soon as you get through to police dispatch, give your address and *repeat it*. This way, if you are cut off, the dispatcher knows where to send the cavalry. Don't trust "dedicated 911," the high-tech system in which your address is supposed to show up on the dispatcher's digital screen as soon as your call is received. First, not every jurisdiction has Dedicated 911, particularly in rural areas. Second, if you live in a remote and inaccessible place, the responding officer may not know exactly how to get there. If you stay on the line, which is always a good idea, the dispatcher can ask you for directions that will hasten the arrival of responding officers.

If you really think intruders have breached the walls, don't talk about "burglary." Tell the dispatcher, "I think there is an intruder in my home!"

This is a much more serious call. In some heavy action areas, a burglary call is just a few cuts above a lost dog call in terms of our perceived urgency of response, but an intruder there now with you inside is the much more serious crime of home invasion. It will trigger a response similar to a DefCon 4 alert at a SAC base. Cops for miles around will drop what they're doing and race to the scene.

**Leave it to the officers.** A common mistake is for a citizen to call the police to report intruders in the home, then grab a gun and go looking for them. This sets the stage for a mistaken identity tragedy. The responding officer may well reconnoiter the home before attempting to enter, often looking through windows. He is worried about "person with a gun, there now." He sees you with your firearm—a "person with a gun, there now." He levels his own gun at you and shouts a sharp warning command. You reflexively turn toward the sound, your gun turning with you, and...BANG!

Once you have called the police, you have declared this particular arena to be theirs. For you to then enter that arena is to contaminate the arena and set up a mistaken identity shooting. When you think there is an intrusion, get the family into one room, what we call a "safe room," and call police. Stay on the line. Give the dispatchers a description of yourself and your family, and advise that you are armed. *Remain where you are.* You have heard someone enter the house. Is it a second intruder, or a responding officer? If you've maintained phone contact, the dispatcher can tell you.

It's a good idea to have a key to your house on a stick of Cyalume. This is the chemical lightstick that divers use to mark objects in murky water. You can buy it at a dive shop, or in the month before Halloween. General stores and drugstores usually have fresh ones on hand that are just the right size for a house key; they sell them to kids to keep the trick-or-treaters from getting run over in the dark. You can tell Dispatch that you're throwing a key to the house on a lightstick out the window for the responding officers. This will facilitate their quick entry to do their rescue job without damaging your doors or windows. It would be even more helpful if you could draw up a floor plan of your house, reduce it and photocopy it and then laminate it at someplace like Mailboxes USA, and have that attached to the lightstick with the house key. Those of us who have had to search unfamiliar places for dangerous things find it a Godsend to have a floor plan. It also greatly enhances our ability to get the search done safely and expeditiously for you.

**Remember: not all cops look like cops.** In rural areas, the thin blue line is thinner still. Sometimes, the first responding officer will be an "on-call" patrolman or deputy who was off duty at home in plainclothes when

he or she got the call-out. If your call is urgent, there's no time to don the uniform; the cop may simply grab a gun and a pair of handcuffs and get underway in jeans and T-shirt or with a heavy winter coat that obscures underlying identification like a badge on a belt. For a high priority call like a home invasion in progress, the first responder may be an on-duty investigator in plainclothes.

In short, the responding officer may not look like an LAPD recruiting poster. I've been in big cities running with undercover cops who looked and dressed like the Belker character on the old TV show *Hill Street Blues*. I've been with them when they responded to home invasion calls, because the nature of the emergency was so urgent. You look through a window and instead of a clean-cut lad in a crisply tailored uniform you see someone with a gun who looks as if he just stepped off the cover of *Easyriders* magazine. The preconditioned bias and prejudice that all of us have to fight may tell you, "Criminal! Shoot!" Resist the urge: it may well be the first responding officer who has come to help you.

**When one of us pulls you over.** There you are, driving along and minding your own business, when suddenly you see red, or blue, or red and blue lights flashing in the mirror. What do you do?

Well, for starters, pull over. Private citizens have no idea how many of their neighbors will see us behind them with our roof lights blazing merrily, make direct eye contact with us through their rear view mirrors or even looking at us over their shoulders, and keep on truckin'. When they finally pull over and we ask them why they didn't stop when they should have, the answer is usually, "Uh, I thought you were gonna pass me and pull over the car ahead of me."

Don't kid yourself. It's you. We want you. If we wanted the guy ahead

of you, we would have pulled up behind him and turned on the emergency lights. But when you kept on going, we could only assume that you were making up your mind whether to fight or flee, either of which threatens us, and you can understand why our alertness level just went up two or three notches.

**Pull over.** Not with a tire-screaming powerslide across four lanes of traffic, and not on a curve or something. Apply your turn signal, tap your brakes, slow down, and show us that you are trying to comply and pull over. That will do.

Don't start reaching for the license in your hip pocket or carry bag, or the registration in your purse, until the officer asks for it. Seen from behind, it looks to us as if you're reaching for a weapon. The officer will ask for license and registration. That will be time enough. State, "my registration is in the glove box," and reach slowly. Say something like, "my driver's license is in my hip pocket, Officer, and I have to reach down with my right hand to unbuckle the seat belt to reach it."

When your vehicle comes to a stop and before the officer approaches, turn off the engine unless it is excruciatingly hot or cold and you really need the A/C or the heater. This alleviates the officer of a constant worry, that the motorist will deliberately or accidentally go into reverse and run him down as he approaches on foot. Turn on your emergency flashers. If it is dark out, turn on the interior lights. This shows the officer that you have nothing to hide. It helps prevent your reach to the glove box from being mistaken as a furtive movement for a weapon.

Do not get out of the car and approach the officer, unbidden. This tells him that there is something in your car that you don't want him to see, and will undoubtedly lengthen instead of shorten the traffic stop. Also, your exiting your vehicle and

approaching the officer's fits the single most common pattern of ambush murder of police in traffic stops, and may well prompt the officer to draw a sidearm.

Since this is a "firearms" column, a brief digression is appropriate. If you are a law-abiding citizen exercising your rights to have guns in your car and are doing so lawfully, you have no problem. Some jurisdictions require that anyone licensed to carry a concealed weapon and doing so immediately make that fact known to any police officer with whom they have contact. Yelling "I've got a gun" is not the way to do it. The best bet is to carry your pistol permit next to your driver's license, and hand both over at once.

In some other jurisdictions, you may not be required to advise an officer that you are armed on first contact, but the state department of motor vehicles may cross-reference

with permit-issuing authorities. The result is that before or during the stop the officer will become aware of the fact that you are licensed to carry. If he finds out that you had the gun and didn't tell him, it's just natural human psychology for him to feel that you're hiding something from him. In such a jurisdiction I would also hand the permit to the officer at the same time as driver's license, automobile registration, proof of insurance, etc.

Even in jurisdictions where the above is not required, if the officer says "Please step out of the car," you can expect that a gun on your person will soon become visible. This would happen in a routine pat-down if you fit the description of a suspect they're looking for, or if the officer is simply going to request a roadside field sobriety test that might involve movements like arms going out to the side before coming back to touch a nose, which tends to pull coats open

and all that. Were I asked to step out of the car, I would reply, "Certainly, Officer. However, I'm licensed to carry, and I do have it on. How do you want to proceed?" He or she will know what you're talking about, but you haven't uttered that scary word "gun," which under circumstances like these can produce negative reactions. The cop will take it from there.

Space is running out. The bottom line is this: use common sense, treat the officer the way you would want to be treated if you were in his or her position, obey the law, and your interactions with police should turn out just fine. We mean that "protect and serve" thing. We're here for you. Meet us halfway. Δ

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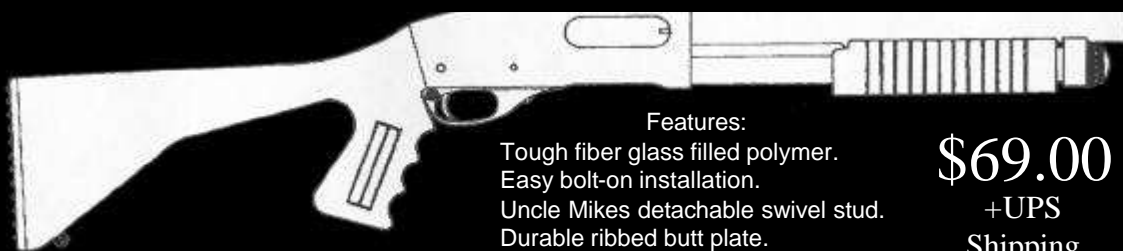
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# Living the outlaw life:

## Going PT: an experiment in freedom on the road by Claire Wolfe

**W**hat would you give up to be more free? Would you risk the wrath of the IRS, sell your home, and forsake security and stability if you believed it increased the amount of freedom in the world? Or if you thought it would make you personally more liberated?

That's what Miranda and Paul Cristobel\* did.

In the late 1990s, they left behind their conventional life and headed out on the highway. On the surface, theirs resembled the "snowbird" existence of countless retirees. Except that they were young, educated, middle-class professionals who took their white-collar jobs with them. Except that they traveled with two children, including a newborn baby. And except that their goal was to resist taxes, keep their family essentially stateless, and carry the message of resistance to friends, acquaintances, and strangers around the country.

Theirs was an experiment in the PT life. PT—meaning Perpetual Traveler or Prior Taxpayer—was originally conceived by W.G. Hill and popularized by Scope International, publisher of offshore living and investment reports. In its pure form, it means living in one country, banking in another, basing your business in another, and being a citizen of yet another. The theory: By not fully belonging to any country, you fly under the tax radars of all and may avoid the worst impositions of their bureaucracies' regulatory agencies.

When the Cristobels set out, they were seeking a modest domestic variation on PT—as much of the independence as they could get without the formidable obstacles of going offshore.

*\* Names and minor details have been changed to protect privacy. All essential elements of their story—those that might help others learn from their experience—are presented accurately.*

By some measures, their experiment was a failure. It ended in just two years with a retreat (temporary, they're quick to say) to a more compromising life. By other measures, it was a success. Above all, it was a learning experience in one unusual form of Outlaw living.

The Cristobels are a married couple in their late 30s, he a software engineer, she a technical writer. Until they hit the PT road, they had lived pretty conventionally in a mid-sized city. They worked from home but paid their "fair share" of taxes. They sent their first child, Jeremiah, to government school, though they found themselves frequently struggling to "decondition" him to the government-supremacist messages he received in his classes.

Long-time liberty activists and devout Christians, they increasingly came to realize, in the latter years of the Clinton administration, that the compromises and submission to government required by their "normal" life were in painful conflict with their ideals. They wanted to walk the walk for liberty and practice the Christianity they preached. Their decision to "go PT" was above all, a decision to resist evil.

To preserve privacy, they haven't talked much about their experience since they returned. But Miranda shared their story for this article.

**Outlaw Life:** What prompted you to hit the road?

**Miranda Cristobel:** Clinton's contempt for everything that freedom stood for. He supported warrantless searches and the complete destruction of privacy. He issued executive orders like some people smoke cigarettes. We didn't—and we don't—like the assumption that government has the right to run every part of everyone's life. We didn't want one cent of our money to go to that freedom-hating, lying, amoral man. As Clinton's presidency went on it became a concern that was pressing on us more and more. When he started dropping bombs on innocent people in Serbia, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. We

couldn't, in good conscience, help pay the U.S. government to do that.

We decided on mobility because we felt that if we stayed put someplace and didn't pay taxes that would make us an easier target. We didn't want the IRS to "Waco" us and our family.

We believed we must also resist numbering and other impositions of government power on our lives. When our youngest child, Rachel, was born (during the decision to go PT), she was born at home with no government paperwork—no government birth certificate and no social security number. We wanted a more free life for her.

But PT had been on our minds for years. We like to travel and we felt it would be a good opportunity for Jeremiah—who was 10 when we set out—to see the country, meet interesting people, and learn new things by experiencing them, rather than just having them droned at him in a classroom.

**Outlaw Life:** How did you get started?

**Miranda:** We both had independent income streams. We talked with all of our clients and set things up so that we could make contact with them from the road to receive and send work. We got a P.O. box in the town we were leaving and arranged for a contact person, a friend, to forward our mail. Clients agreed to pay us by money order, since we wouldn't have access to a bank account.

We didn't do anything flashy to draw attention to ourselves and what we were doing. Each of us told clients that the other had a project requiring extensive travel, and that our trip was a kind of extended working vacation.

We considered the impact on our children, especially the baby, of not having a permanent home. But we decided we could work around that. Once the hurdles were addressed, it was a matter of finding an RV that was suitable for our purposes and selling the family car and house (another big tax burden off our shoulders!). We had a huge garage sale. One day everything was wrapped up and we headed north.

**Outlaw Life:** Why did you opt for domestic PT, rather than going offshore?

**Miranda:** Originally we wanted to go to Costa Rica (where there is a burgeoning freedom movement of both expatriates and natives), but we discovered that Costa Rica had recently changed its law and our baby would have needed her own passport, rather than traveling on ours. We decided that having Rachel on the government's records was against what we were trying to do and against our hopes for her future.

**Outlaw Life:** How did your new life work?

**Miranda:** We drove long distances on some days. Other times we camped for a while. In addition to the RV we had tents, so if Jeremiah wanted privacy he could stay in the tent instead of the RV. Or we could take the laptop out there and work.

Sometimes we'd stay with friends for a few days and enjoy the luxury of a hot bath. We have a large network of friends, family, and church contacts, and I'm not sure it would have been possible to live as we did without them.

We were very proactive with our clients. When we were going to be camping in an area with minimal phone access or even no phone access we were sure to let them know in advance. When we stayed in friends' houses they would very generously let us set up in a corner to work and send work out to our clients. At other times, we couldn't even find a pay phone to keep in touch. In just the last couple of years, with better mobile communication devices, that's changed. Staying connected should be easier for anyone who tries that lifestyle now.

**Outlaw Life:** Did your clients adapt well to the situation?

**Miranda:** Unfortunately, no. People who were happy to work with us when we were working out of our home were less interested in sending work to us on the road. We were out of sight and out of mind. So while all of our failsafes didn't fail, enough did to put us in financial jeopardy. We had expected some attrition and thought we'd planned for it. But we hadn't planned well enough.

**Outlaw Life:** Did you try alternate means of earning a living?

**Miranda:** We could have tried harder to get jobs that we could have done as we traveled ... done temporary maintenance work, made an arrangement to sell cookies, or something like that. We could also have sold crafts or set up as traveling flea-market vendors.

However, we had invested heavily in our professional work and we thought other occupations would detract from that. Because we were determined to make it through our chosen careers, we were less flexible than others might be. In retrospect, that may have been a mistake—although the fact that we went into this adventure with too big a debt load was certainly a worse mistake. We could have lasted a lot longer without that burden.

**Outlaw Life:** How did your lifestyle support freedom?

**Miranda:** It's one thing to talk about freedom while you're a drone in a corporate cubicle, while you're paying your property tax, your income tax, your phone tax, your social security tax, and every other kind of tax. But when you get paid by a money order that leaves no paper trail of your activities, it's yours to spend as you wish, with no one taking 30 percent out of it. That may not sound like a lot, but it feels like a very big thing to know that the money you earned is yours, not the government's.

The ability to go where you want when you want was also really great. We looked like a vacationing family so we really didn't fit the militia, patriot, fundamentalist, right-wing extremist whacko, etc. mold. People usually didn't give us a second glance. But in campgrounds when

it wasn't vacation season, people would ask questions. We would explain that we were traveling contractors. This gave us the chance to joke about things like how this lifestyle let us pay less in taxes. It's amazing how people would get it, how they responded to the idea of living independently and withdrawing support from government ... clerks in Wal-Mart, campground operators, they were all receptive.

As we went along, too, we were delivering a message to our friends and contacts: If you want freedom you have to free yourself. Yes, you'll have to work hard and take risks. Bad things do happen. But freedom is worth it. Freedom isn't going to be handed to anybody. Every day you see in the paper how government control over us is growing. How they're tracking, controlling, regulating, taxing—enslaving us more and more. The only way you're going to stop that is to resist it.

**Outlaw Life:** What was best about your life?

**Miranda:** The absolutely liberating sense of freedom we had. We were our own people, able to do what we wanted, when we wanted. That sense of freedom continued through a lot of the adventure despite setbacks.

It was a good experience for the children, too. For instance, driving through the slums along the border of Texas really opened Jeremiah's eyes to how much richer even our poor mobile lifestyle was. He could still plug in his Nintendo games or watch his portable TV. He could also meet other people in the campgrounds and see that despite what the government and the media say about child snatchers, people are basically decent.

**Outlaw Life:** What were the biggest adjustments you had to make?

**Miranda:** The biggest adjustments were things like the lack of electricity because we didn't dare run down the RV battery with the Nintendo, computer, or TV. Potable water. We had a tank in the RV, but we had to be mindful. Sanitation, of course. And I love to cook and going from an adequate kitchen to a dinky RV kitchen or even a campfire was an adjustment.

We had no privacy. The baby slept with us. It was pretty tight quarters. There were times when it was really rainy out and no tent could have withstood it, so we were all crammed in the RV together for days. Every family looks at the steak knives after an experience like that.

**Outlaw Life:** What made you ultimately decide to return to the "real world"?

**Miranda:** The economics were a big part of it, having so many clients fail in their commitment to send us work. Had it been just my husband and myself we'd have stuck it out longer. But we also had a boy who was entering his teenage years and was feeling the pull of material things, as children of that age do. Also, as our financial situation became more difficult, the burden of being responsible for

a baby became greater to me. I worried. Are all her needs being met? Will she get enough to eat? That was hard on me and because it was hard on me it was hard on the whole family.

But what finally brought us back was that my husband got a calling that allowed him to pursue both his freedom activism and his ministry. We couldn't pass it up.

**Outlaw Life:** What were the hardest adjustments of returning?

**Miranda:** Going back under the thumb-screws of the state. Giving them our money.

I want to emphasize that, in the years we were on the road, we received no correspondence, no demands from the IRS. In order for Paul to accept this position, we chose to pop up and say, "We didn't file for those years." We hadn't kept paperwork during our time on the road; we had burned it all. The need to find and supply documents for the IRS, even though we didn't make enough to owe them money for that period ... well, the boulder got put right back on our shoulders.

**Outlaw Life:** What would you recommend to other people interested in trying a mobile PT life?

**Miranda:** We did this to a large degree out of passion. Although we tried our very best to plan, our passion made us more hasty than we should have been. We proved that you don't have to be wealthy, but you do have to plan well and have some reserves.

You also have to be flexible about how you'll earn a living.

You really have to be a pessimist when planning for a PT life because Murphy's law takes over. That's not to say we wouldn't do it again; in fact we're planning to as soon as we can—and to do it better, next time.

Despite all the challenges and the setbacks, to anyone who's thinking about this life I'd say it's worth it for you and your children. The biggest thing people need to do is not sell themselves short—as we did by denying ourselves alternative opportunities for earning a living, for example.

Be creative, be flexible. Trust in yourself and in God. Cutting the legs out from under Leviathan is essential if we are to be free. Δ

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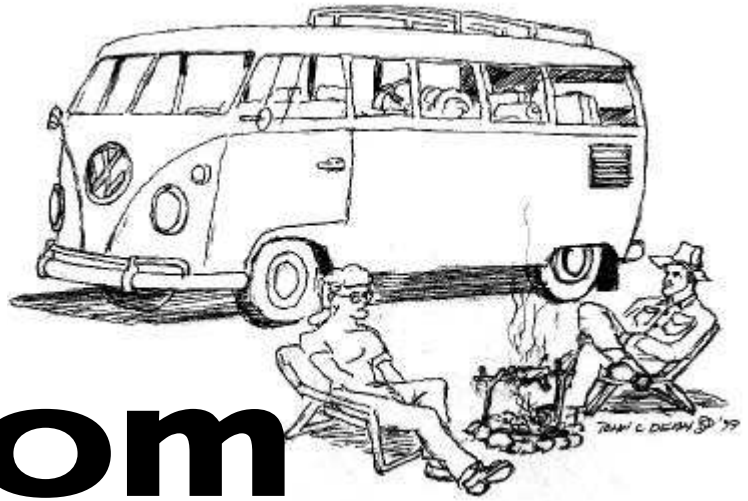
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# 13 steps to a life of freedom



*By Mary Ann Wutzke*

**M**y husband and I have lived in the desert and mountain back country of Arizona since 1988. We own no home and just about all of our possessions fit into a '67 VW Bus. Simplicity is our key to freedom and happiness. We consider ourselves hunters and gatherers of the modern world.

We subject ourselves to survival scrapes and take backpacking trips into areas that would rip the skin off the bare legs and arms of the city dwelling, green worshipping, fashion plated backpackers in khaki shorts who follow maintained trails through the "wilderness." We have become experienced in the construction, usefulness, and practicality (or sometimes impracticality) of crude survival tools such as fire bows, deadfalls, and sagebrush shelters.

We have devised original, unique, and efficient means of collecting and processing wild foods by gathering and experimenting with what nature provides. Leaping the bounds of food prejudice, we dine regularly on such fine cuisine as bear roast and barrel cactus, jackrabbit with mesquite dressing and blue dicks. We have enjoyed

barbecued beaver and nopales (prickly pear pads) with chocolate covered tunas (prickly pear fruits) for dessert. We have consumed just about every animal that swims, flies, runs, creeps, or crawls and is legal to hunt in Arizona. That old trickster, Mr. Coyote, is the only creature to take gastronomical revenge upon us—an experience we do not want to repeat. In addition to preparing their meats, we enjoy tanning the animals' hides, from the discarded elk skins we scavenge during elk season to the kangaroo rats we make into silly finger puppets.

We live out of doors. We cook, eat, bathe, and sleep out beyond the walls that blind and restrain. This has allowed us to know the animals, insects, plants, ambience, and sky as few others do. A teacher true to the heart, I enjoy sharing my knowledge and experience with others who have similar interests. My hope is to help them progress so that they can make their own mistakes instead of plagiarizing mine. Therefore, for the past nine years, I have been recording many of our observations, experiences, adventures, misadventures, thoughts, experiments, recipes, successes, and failures in the form of

journals, photographs, sketches, and collections.

It is difficult to realize how much we have learned over the past decade. It seems we have always known what we know now. It is not until I look back to my first journal that I flush with embarrassment at our ignorance. But the learning never ends. Each day presents a new puzzle or discovery so that we feel we have caught but mere glimpses of the profound cruelties, complexities, and capriciousness of Mother Nature.

In order that you may achieve your own version of freedom and happiness, you might consider the following suggestions for simplifying your life.

1. Dispose of, give away, or sell off everything that is not useful, or anything of mere sentimental (we call this semi-mental) value such as knick-knacks, souvenirs, and that dearly beloved whatchamacallit. Toss out all those things you "might be able to use someday" such as wood and metal scraps, junk, old spare parts, defunct equipment, that machine whose sole purpose for the past five years has been to keep the garage floor well greased, unfinished projects, and any

unnecessary books, clothes, pots, pans, dishes, and furniture.

2. Do not buy anything you cannot afford. Do not take out any loans. Cut up all of your credit cards. Close out your checking accounts and use cash or money orders for all transactions.

3. Do not keep any animals. They only tie you down and cost you money. However, if animals are a must with you, have useful animals—deadbeat pets belong in the stew pot.

4. Do not own a vehicle which has been deliberately designed to be impossible for you to maintain or repair. Do not own any piece of machinery which is smarter than you are.

5. Get rid of toys that you do not use nor enjoy nearly as much as you think you should. Bid adieu to such things as the motor bike you rarely ride or the exercise machine you use as an obstacle course to the couch. Even if you are actually using one now, it will become obsolete because exercise is the natural result of mountains, valleys, snow, open spaces, trees, and children. Sell the motor home and luxury liner you use two weeks out of the year—try a tent and a canoe or row boat and stay away from campgrounds.

6. Downsize your living quarters. You can waste your entire life away planning, building, cleaning, repairing, and adding on to a house. This not only makes you subject to government controls and hassles but also restricts your mobility. Put that time and effort into the enjoyment of your children, your spouse, the countryside, hunting and fishing, horseback riding, or whatever thrills you.

7. No one can deny that children complicate life but most people find them irresistible so I will not try to talk you out of having them. If, however, you are young, do not be overly eager to become a parent. If or when you have children, listen to and observe them. They are full of vital information such as where grandma is most ticklish and they are “simple”

wise. They can tell you: A picnic in the woods is far superior to a fancy restaurant dinner. Mud pies are more interesting than statistics pies. Time is more precious than money. Egg tosses are more fun if the eggs are putrefied. Life is a continual exploration. Trails are for followers and conformists. Your butt is for sliding. Bees like to pop balloons. And one big black beetle in the hand is worth 20 television documentaries about insects.

8. Do not work a full-time job. If you presently have a great paying job, after simplifying your life and reducing your expenditures to a minimum’s minimum, you might want to work for a year or two saving every penny you can possibly save and then quit. When you need money, make things to sell for cash or barter; find odd jobs or seasonal contract work. If you do contract work, keep it simple. If after three months you have enough money to last the rest of the year, do not take another job simply because it is available. It is time to go play.

9. Stop trying to function within the system. Do not try to run a business unless it is something very minor and involves no government intervention (a virtual impossibility these days). Homeschool your children. Do not join a union. Do not work for the government, accept any government monies, or participate in any government programs. Once you buy into their game, you have to play by their rules which are anything but simple. If you think you stand to gain something by entering into partnership with the government, just ask any trapper what it has profited the animal who has taken the bait. Acting against one’s conscience is also a complicated, tangled web. The government acquires money through legalized extortion. But, unless you allow the government to determine your values, you probably still live by the old-fashioned adage that stealing is wrong. Therefore, do not let your greed convince you that it is okay to rob your

neighbor simply because the government is holding the gun to his head.

10. Avoid clocks, radios, telephones and, most of all, television like the plague.

11. Never forget your own mortality. This will make every minute precious. You will feel the urgency of living each moment to its fullest, of enjoying your family rather than wasting time bickering, and of doing what you want to do now instead of some surrealistic time in the ethereal future. Your values will change and you will transform from a sedentary haver-observer to an active experiencer-doer.

12. Marry your best friend.

13. Stop trying to be someone else’s notion of success.

If much of this sounds painful, you have not come to terms with the fact that you do not own things, they own you. The proof of this is in the pain. However, when you discover how much more free time you have, how much more relaxed you are, how much more fun you are having, how much happier you are, how much more likeable you are...the list goes on, it will suddenly occur to you that you have not simplified enough. We have less than everybody we know and yet my in-laws do not give us Christmas presents because, “It is hard to buy for someone who has everything.” I do not know if they realize the profundity of their own words, but once you do, you will be giggling with delight all the way to the dumpster and... FREEDOM! Δ

# Surplus firearms

## for preparedness and self-defense

By Jeff Salmon

**A**s Massad Ayoob points out in the November/December, 2001 issue of *Backwoods Home Magazine* (Do rural homeowners need guns for self-defense?) many criminals are targeting rural areas. The reasons for this are two-fold: Many criminals have been forced out of major urban areas thanks to successful urban law enforcement activities. Conversely, rural areas have fewer law enforcement resources per square mile and are seen as “easy pickings” by criminals.

The fact is, in rural America, help may be a long time coming and rural residents may be forced to resort to legal self-defense, including the use of firearms. Additionally, rural dwellers pursuing agricultural endeavors may need firearms for predator control, while others may want to use them for hunting.

Military surplus firearms are affordable, reliable, and effective weapons for self-defense, predator control, and hunting. This article will review some of the more common surplus firearms on the market, and discuss their relative merits and how to obtain them.

### Curios & relics

The “curios and relics” classification is a little-known secret about military surplus firearms. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) has classified many surplus firearms as “curios and relics” (C&R). The firearms discussed in here fall into this classification. Due to the nature of these firearms, BATF exempts them from the terms of the Brady Law, i.e. background checks. Further, BATF offers a low-cost license for collectors of C&R

firearms that allows license-holders to purchase these firearms via interstate commerce (i.e. mail order.) We’ll discuss pros and cons and the how-to’s of obtaining this license later, as well as other avenues of acquiring these weapons.

### Why surplus C&R firearms?

There are a number of reasons why a backwoods homesteader should consider purchasing military surplus firearms for defense and survival.

**Cost:** Wholesale/Collector prices for NRA-rated “good” firearms start at \$39, not including shipping. A very nice “excellent” rated rifle can be had for less than \$150. Please note that all prices quoted in this article are wholesale/collector prices.

**Availability:** Since the end of the Cold War, many Eastern European countries have made their surplus firearms available on the open market. This not only drives down prices, but also, through market forces, increases the supply of spare parts, accessories, and ammo.



*Clockwise from left: Colt Systema, Ballester Molina both in .45 ACP and East German Makarov in 9 x 18 mm Makarov caliber*

**Reliability:** The C&R firearms described in this article are solid, no-nonsense weapons designed and built for the rigors of combat. Many are still successfully used today in various parts of the world.

**Stopping power:** The standard caliber of U.S. forces’ M-16 rifle and M-4 carbine is the 5.56mm (.223 Remington). Globally, most nations have adopted weapons with the same or similar caliber. The firearms discussed here have significantly more stopping power and range by virtue of their larger calibers. The Lee-Enfield, for example, has an effective



*From top: Swedish Mauser M96, Turkish Mauser M36, and British Enfield Lee-Enfield*

range of 1,000 meters. Compare this to the M-16's effective range of 350 meters.

**Expanding security options:** Even those who already own contemporary firearms may wish to augment/expand their security options with surplus firearms. They make good second guns when you don't want to risk damaging your expensive hunting rifle.

## C&R rifles and carbines

The **Lee-Enfield** models are of British, Irish, Australian, or Indian origin and are usually chambered for the British .303. Exceptions include the Indian "Ishapore" rifle and some of the "Jungle" models, which are chambered for the .308. The Lee-

as the 8 x 57mm). Some, such as the Spanish M1916, are available in .308 caliber making them more palatable to individuals concerned about ammunition availability. Other calibers include the 7.65 Argentina and the 6.5 x 55 Swedish. Prices range from as little as \$39 for a "good" condition Turkish M38/46, to \$120 for the Yugoslavian M48 or Czech V-24 in "excellent" condition.

The **Mosin-Nagant** was originally developed and introduced in Russia in 1891 and is currently available in numerous models produced by various countries. Two basic configurations are widely available: M91, M91/30, and M39 (heavy barrel) rifles and the M38, M44, M91/59 carbines. Mosin-Nagants are bolt actions

and chambered for the 7.62 x 54R (for rimmed) cartridge. The shorter barreled carbine versions offer quick handling at a sacrifice of long range accuracy. The rifles have greater accuracy (the Russian snipers in the

recent movie *Enemy at the Gates* used these rifles equipped with telescopic sights); however, they have very long barrels (28 inches) and not suitable for close-in work. Prices and conditions vary; an NRA-rated "good" Model 91 or M44 can be had for as little as \$39. In the moderate range, the M39 Heavy Barrel in "very good" condition can be had for \$90. An "excellent" rated Sako-manufactured Model 91/30 can cost in the \$400 range.

The **SKS** (Self-loading Karbine Simonov) is a popular semi-automatic weapon chambered for the 7.62 x 39 mm cartridge. It has a fixed 10-shot magazine that loads from the

top. The SKS is available in many configurations and originates from many countries. Presently, the Russian, Romanian, and Yugoslavian versions are classified as C&R firearms. The Russian and Yugoslavian are probably the highest quality, with the Yugoslavian being the most available and affordable. The Yugoslavian M59/66 is wholesaling for around \$150. Russian SKSs, when available, are commanding prices in the \$350 range, a bit pricey for most folks, and the Romanian models are becoming scarce.

## C&R handguns

The **Ballester-Molina** is an Argentinean copy of the Colt 1911 single-action, semi-automatic pistol in .45 caliber. Only the magazines and barrels are interchangeable with the Colt version. It lacks the grip safety as well. They are, however, solid, reliable handguns that use widely available .45 ACP ammunition. Look for the excellent, arsenal-refinished version costing around \$225, less than half the cost of a new Colt or similar 1911.

The **Colt Systema** also hails from Argentina and is a much closer copy of the Colt 1911. Most parts are interchangeable and it does include the grip safety. In my opinion, it is a better handgun; however, availability is spotty. Price is slightly higher than the Ballester.

The **Makarov** is a more compact, smaller-caliber double-action semi-automatic pistol suitable for concealed carry. It was originally developed by the Soviet Union; however most of the Warsaw-pact nations had their own versions. The Makarov shoots a 9 x 18mm cartridge that is one millimeter shorter than the 9mm Parabellum (AKA 9mm Luger) and one millimeter longer than the .380ACP. Very similar to the Walther PPK (James Bond's famous handgun), it is a solid and reliable handgun. Prices are in the \$110 to \$200



From top: Hungarian Mosin-Nagant M-58 and Polish Mosin-Nagant M-44 carbines

Enfield was originally introduced in Great Britain in 1895 as the Mark I model. Enfields are solid, accurate rifles battle-tested in World War I, World War II, Korea, and numerous other conflicts. These rifles are bolt-action and are available in a wide range of models including the carbine Jungle versions. Prices range from \$90 for a good condition #1, Mark III to over \$200 for unissued-condition models.

The **Mausers** are offered in such a wide range of models that space permits mentioning only the most widely available versions. Mausers are bolt-action rifles usually chambered for the 8mm Mauser cartridge (also know

range depending on model and condition. Ammunition is widely and inexpensively available through mail order, in both full metal jacket and hollowpoint. It should be noted that many of the available models are not C&R eligible. Versions that are include the East German and early Soviet models. Go for the East German version for the C&R, the Bulgarian version for non-C&R. Stay clear of versions with the high-capacity, double-stack magazine as they have a reputation for less than reliable service.

## Selection considerations

If I were starting to build a collection of firearms for survival and self-defense, I'd look at acquiring at least three weapons: a handgun for home defense, a carbine for the pickup or SUV, and a long-barreled rifle for hunting and predator control. For the sake of economy and utility, one should consider getting the same model and caliber carbine and rifle. The Lee-Enfield and Mosin-Nagant are available in both carbine and rifle versions.

**Ammunition availability:** One objection to surplus firearms frequently raised is the availability of suitable ammunition. While "monster marts" may not stock this ammunition, your local dealer probably does or can order it for you. Better yet, buy in bulk from one of the mail order suppliers listed in this article. You'll get a better deal and it's always a good idea to have plenty of ammo on hand.

There are two basic types of ammo available for these weapons: full metal jacket (FMJ) for plinking and target use and soft point for hunting/defense. Both are available from sources noted herein. A note of caution: read advertisements carefully to get non-corrosive (N/C) ammo. If it doesn't say non-corrosive, it probably is corrosive. There is nothing wrong with corrosive ammo, but just

make sure to thoroughly clean the weapon after using it. Many shooters use a two-step cleaning process when using corrosive ammo. First use hot soapy water through the bore followed by a conventional cleaning.

**Accessories:** Accessories for the C&R firearms described in this article are widely available from gun dealers, gun shows, and mail orders sources. These include scope mounts, heavy duty fiberglass stocks, bipods, and many other useful accessories.

**Physical condition:** The National Rifle Association offers an almost universally used rating system for the condition of firearms. Starting at the top is "new," then "excellent," "very good," "good," and "fair." (See the NRA Firearms Fact Book, pages 7 and 8, for more information.) Additionally, surplus firearms are offered in "unissued" condition, that is to say, the weapon has never been issued to combat troops and is in like-new condition. I prefer weapons that are rated NRA "very good" or above. Weapons rated below this are functional but may require extra clean-up to be cosmetically acceptable. A word of caution: since surplus weapons are used and often packed in gun grease (cosmoline), a thorough cleaning and inspection is in order before firing the weapon. If you have any doubts as to the safety of the weapon, have it checked out by a competent gunsmith before firing.

## Obtaining C&R firearms

After you have researched and selected the particular firearm or firearms that meet your needs using the resources contained in this article, there are several ways

you can obtain a C&R classified firearm.

For those bitten by the collecting bug, a C&R collectors license may be in order. This license costs \$30 for three years and allows the holder to purchase C&R firearms directly from wholesalers at the same cost retailers pay. See BATF's website listed in this article for more information, including the very useful and interesting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section. You can download the application form there as well.

If you are hesitant about dealing with the BATF directly, many gun stores or dealers offer these firearms for sale or can order them for you.

Additionally, *Shotgun News* offers a service on its website that lists dealers in your area who will order firearms for you for a fee.

Gun shows are a great way to get a hands-on look at these firearms. One caveat: if you decide to buy from a gun show dealer, make sure that you can contact them if there are any issues with the gun. A reputable dealer will stand behind the firearm. If you purchase at a gun show, you may wish to purchase from a dealer who also has a retail storefront operation.

## Sources of information for C&R firearms

**Licensing information:** Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Phone: 404-679-5040 or call local office.



From top: Russian and Yugoslavian SKS carbines

The official website of the BATF that issues C&R licenses is [www.atf.treas.gov/firearms/curios](http://www.atf.treas.gov/firearms/curios). This URL takes you to the C&R information pages. Learn about the license (including a robust FAQ section) and download a copy of the application form.

**Advertisements for C&R firearms:** *Shotgun News* magazine, 800-495-8362. The website is [www.shotgunnews.com](http://www.shotgunnews.com). This publication has loads of ads for dealers of C&R firearms. Look for "C&R" or "C&R eligible" notations in ads for specific weapons. Their web site has a dealer locator service, click on "FFL Guide"

**Wholesalers of firearms including C&R weapons and ammo:**

Centerfire Systems, 800-950-1231, [www.centerfiresystems.com](http://www.centerfiresystems.com). Has some C&R firearms, plus accessories and ammo.

Century International Arms, 800-527-1252, [www.centuryarms.com](http://www.centuryarms.com).

Classic Arms, 800-383-8011, [www.classicarms.org](http://www.classicarms.org).

J&G Sales, Ltd., 928-445-9650, [www.jgsales.com](http://www.jgsales.com). Some C&R firearms, plus soft point hunting ammo in many C&R calibers

Inter Ordnance, 704-225-8843, [www.interordnance.com](http://www.interordnance.com)

Sarco Inc., 908-647-3800, [www.sarcoinc.com](http://www.sarcoinc.com). C&R firearms and parts.

Southern Ohio Gun, 800-944-4867, [www.southernohiogun.com](http://www.southernohiogun.com).

Wholesale Guns and Ammo, 631-234-7676, [www.gunsnammo.com](http://www.gunsnammo.com).

**Websites with information on individual C&R firearms:**

[www.geocities.com/lee\\_enfield\\_rifles/](http://www.geocities.com/lee_enfield_rifles/)

[www.makarov.com](http://www.makarov.com)

[www.russian-mosin-nagant.com](http://www.russian-mosin-nagant.com)

**Books on C&R firearms:**

*The Gun Digest Book of Firearms Assembly/Disassembly, Part IV: Centerfire Rifles*, by J.B. Wood. Contains complete takedown instruc-

tions for most of the rifles and carbines described in this article. North Cape Publications, [www.north-capepubs.com](http://www.north-capepubs.com)

The *For Collectors Only* series of books on many of the firearms described in this article.

*The World's Great Rifles*, by Roger Ford, published by Barnes and Noble Books, New York, [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com). A well-illustrated book showing the development of the modern rifle. Gives background and history of many C&R firearms.

*The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Firearms*, by Ian V. Hogg, published by Chartwell Books Inc., New Jersey. Ian V. Hogg is probably the definitive gun historian. This is a well-written and researched book that covers many of the C&R firearms described in this article. Δ

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# Happy chickens healthy eggs

By Edna Manning

I would like to think that our small flock of free range chickens are some of the happiest in the neighborhood.

In the summer they roam freely on our 80-acre hobby farm scratching vigorously for insects and tender young plants. During the winter, they live in a solar-heated partially underground structure. At this time, their usual diet of organically grown grain is supplemented with sand or gravel for grit, oyster shell to provide calcium, excess carrots, potatoes, and beets from our garden, and of course plenty of water. Extra whey from making cottage cheese also goes to the chickens, as do kitchen scraps.

Our motives for raising our own poultry are simple: we are concerned where our food supply comes from. The results of sloppy and confined commercial production of eggs and chicken is that antibiotic residues end up on our tables and in our bodies, and the chickens do not get a varied enough diet, robbing their meat and eggs of valuable nutrients.

Free range chickens get exercise, fresh air, and sunshine. Foraging on plants, seeds, and insects balances the chicken's diet, and they ingest lots of cancer-fighting phytochemicals which are not found in commercial feed. This keeps the chickens healthier by preventing a build-up of parasites or pathogens. Sexual harassment is not as much of a problem as it is with confined birds. It reduces our feed costs up to about 30 percent. The meat from free range birds is darker, firmer, and more flavorful than birds

that are raised indoors, and their eggs contain the cancer-fighting phytochemicals.

The hazards to letting chickens run free is that they are more susceptible to predators—the fox or coyote looking for a fresh chicken dinner, or a hawk looking for easy pickings to feed its young. One way to counter this problem is to keep two or three roosters with the flock, as they tend to act as watchdogs. Also, we have found that the African guinea fowl is a good lookout for the other chickens and will make a terrific racket if it suspects danger nearby. As the chickens go back to their permanent dwelling at night, night predators are not a problem. A six-foot fence around the chicken house keeps the

birds safe if we are away for a weekend or a holiday.

## Nutritious eggs

The egg has taken some hard knocks in recent years, so much in fact that egg consumption in North America has dropped over 20% in the last 15 years.

The bad reputation the egg has received is largely because the egg is high in cholesterol. Cholesterol is a fatty substance that is necessary for many body functions. It is required for both the synthesis of Vitamin D from sunshine and the production of sex hormones. Cholesterol is also used in making bile for food digestion. Cholesterol can be divided into two major types. High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) is the portion of the blood lipids that removes cholesterol and the Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL) from the blood. HDL carries cholesterol and the LDL to the liver where it is broken down and excreted from the body. HDL is the good fraction of cholesterol. It is desirable to have a high HDL cholesterol value in the blood. People who



*Free-range chickens produce healthier meat and eggs.*

One large egg contains 75 calories, 6.25 grams of complete protein, and less than 5 grams of fat.

Egg shells are porous and tend to absorb odors, so keep them away from strong smelling foods like garlic and onions.

Store eggs with the large end up to keep the yolks centered in their shells. When eggs are washed, the "bloom" that seals the pores to keep out bacteria is removed. Eggs stored at 45°F (7°C) and 70% humidity will keep for at least three months.

Always cook eggs at a low temperature—high temperatures set the protein too quickly and result in tough or rubbery eggs.

Hard-boiled eggs are well tolerated by young children who are allergic to soft-cooked or raw eggs.

Allergies to eggs may be caused by raw or undercooked egg whites.

accumulate it in their arteries have an imbalance in these lipoproteins. They have too many LDL's which move the fats out into the arteries, and too few HDL's to bring the unused fats back to the liver for reprocessing.

Contrary to common thinking, the cholesterol you eat does not go straight to your bloodstream. In fact about 80 percent of the cholesterol in your body is manufactured within the

body. The amount of manufactured cholesterol is regulated by the liver, based on your dietary intake.

The Eskimos of Greenland and Iceland eat a diet very high in fat, comprised mostly of fish oils, yet heart problems is not common to these people. The fatty acids in the fish oil contains omega 3 factors, which lower cholesterol and assist in improving the balance between LDL's and HDL's by moving unwanted fats out of the arteries and back to the liver for reprocessing.

Our bodies adjust to varying intakes of fat, both saturated and unsaturated if they are fresh and haven't gone through chemical changes, as that which occurs in hydrogenation. Hydrogenation raises the melting point of fat, hardening and stabilizing it. According to recent book *Good Fat, Bad Fat*, authors Louise Lambert-Lagace and Michelle Laflamme say that the hydrogenation process creates a new type of fat that is not natural—called trans fat. When oils are hydrogenated, their unsaturated fatty acids lose their natural form, called cis, and assume a new form called trans. Studies show that these trans fats increase the bad cholesterol (LDL) and decrease good cholesterol (HDL). The "bad fats" or trans-fatty acids are found in food like margarine, solid shortening, and many

packaged baked goods. The "good fats" are the omega-3 fatty acids found in virgin olive oil, cold-pressed canola oil, flaxseed, and fish such as sardines, salmon, and trout.

The egg yolk contains proteins, fats, cholesterol, pigment, and a number of other nutrients. The fat in egg yolks is mostly unsaturated. These fats are not stored in the body, but rather burned as fuel. All of the fat in an egg is in the yolk. The white is made up of water combined with several different kinds of protein.

A fertilized egg is a complete protein food, containing all the necessary amino acids required by the human body. One egg has 6.25 grams of protein which is equal to one ounce of lean meat, poultry, fish, or legumes. Also the amino acid pattern of eggs is closer to matching the ideal pattern than any other high protein food, including meat. Eggs are a good source of iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin D, Vitamin E, Vitamin B 12, phosphorus, and iodine. In fact, an egg contains all the nutrients necessary for life, except Vitamin C. The egg is also a rich source of lecithin which helps the body utilize cholesterol normally. Lecithin is like a soap. It is a natural emulsifier in egg yolks.

Another point that should be emphasized when discussing fat intake is that if sufficient essential vitamins and minerals are included in the diet the body can break down or burn fat. The problem is not so much in the number of calories but in the lack of consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables that contain the essential nutrients needed to metabolize the food.

Raw vegetables, sprouts, and fresh fruits contain the necessary enzymes to digest food. When we eat too much cooked, processed food our digestive system has to work overtime to produce the enzymes to break the food down. Thus the immune system is weakened, making you more susceptible to colds, flus and allergies. Δ



*Free-range chickens produce eggs that are rich in cancer-fighting phytochemicals, many of which are not available in vitamin supplements.*



# Harvesting the wild cactus

by Jackie Clay

The day was hot and typically sunny. I was hiking through Mills Canyon with a friend from town. Mills Canyon is a mini-Grand Canyon located in northeastern New Mexico's high plains. Carved through centuries of tan and red rock by the frequently raging Canadian River, this wild and gorgeous canyon bottom is an explorer's paradise. The eagles soar overhead, while the cactus bloom and flourish below.

We'd hiked most of the morning and were packing light, figuring to eat off the land. I'd been there before. We were getting a bit hungry and decided it was about time to eat lunch.

Grumbling, my friend looked around and said, "Eat? All there is around here is rocks and cactus!"

I smiled and handed her a bit of fish line from my pocket and tied on a small hook.

"Go catch a few grasshoppers and pull a few fish out of the river," I said. "I'll get the vegetables and dessert."

By the time she returned with three small sunfish, I had the vegetables frying in the pan and cleaned fruit waiting for us. There was even sweetened drink sparkling in our cups.

Knowing better than to ask, she quickly cleaned the fish and added them to the frying pan. "What's that?" she asked.

"Wild onions and nopales (pronounced *no-pall-es*)."

"Nopales? What's that?"

"Cactus pads," I smiled, stirring them with a clean twig. "And we're having cactus fruit for dessert and cactus 'Kool-Aid' to drink."

We did, and even my friend had to admit we ate well.

Rocks and cactus? It's sad that today's person cannot see the grand possibilities right at their feet.

My family gathers cactus products regularly, and with as much enthusiasm as when we gather other tasty wild foods. I even can cactus foods



*Prickly pear in fruit*

for later use. They may be prickly, but they sure are bountiful and good.

## Common edible cactus

The most commonly used cactus are the **prickly pear**, which grows in the South, throughout the Southwest, in California, and in the north from Oregon to Michigan. It is so prolific that it is thought to be a nuisance in many areas. But it is a great food plant.

Many Native American tribes used—still use, today—this wild vegetable and fruit. After all, it tastes good, requires no cultivation or care, and is highly nutritious.

This flat-padded, low-growing cactus produces tender, relatively spineless, bright green new pads each spring. Harvested, these are “nopales” or “nopalitos” (pronounced *no-pall-ee'-tohs*) to Southwestern and Mexican peoples. Nopalitos are despined and sliced green-bean size and fried, boiled, or even pickled. Bob, my picky-eater husband, eats them at every chance and says they taste like tender green beans. I even can them, especially for him, as they are very beneficial for diabetics.

Besides tasty nopalitos, prickly pears produce a bright red fruit or “tuna” in the fall. These range in size from thumb sized to palm size, depending on the variety, growing conditions, and location. Prickly pear

fruits are naturally very sweet, tasting like a combination of kiwi and strawberry—and just as juicy, too. One “mother” plant will produce several dozen tunas, so harvesting is quick and easy.

The only downside is that the fruits’ meat

is relatively thin, surrounding many large, hard seeds.

Another common pest cactus is the **cholla** (pronounced *choy'-ah*). This is a large, shrub-type cactus with many jointed, small arms. At first glance, it looks like a large shrub or small tree. In some areas there are forests of cholla that go on for miles. (The cholla cactus is pictured on the previous page.)

You must be careful about the cholla, as its spines are many, and it’s easy to bang against an arm and get nailed by a joint of spined cactus. Thus, the name “jumping cactus.” It seems to jump out and grab you.

But in the spring, this lovely wild food producer puts out large, tender buds, prior to bursting out into gorgeous purple bloom. And these tight, fat buds are wonderful wild vegetables. Relatively spine-free, they are tender and

easily harvested. I even used to dehydrate bags full, to rehydrate later for winter use. This is the native traditional use of this so-called pest. And these buds are truly delectable.

The cholla is most common in the desert Southwest, growing a bit further northward into some parts of Nevada and Colorado.

Another commonly used cactus is the **giant saguaro** (pronounced *sah-wahr'-oh*). This huge cactus, growing as high as a house with its many large arms reaching to the sky, has become a symbol of the Southwestern desert. (How many John Wayne movies have you seen without a saguaro background?)

This giant produces very large, very tasty tunas. Like the prickly pear, the saguaro fruits are bountiful and extremely tasty. Bob used to run the Arizona desert with Apache families, gathering these wild fruits, which the women would make into fruit leather and candy for “good boys” who helped.

In addition to these most commonly harvested cactus, the fruit of **organ-pipe** and **barrel cactus** provides extra dessert sweets. Naturally.



*Cactus fruit, or tunas. The spines were in the tough “dots” and around the crown.*



*Cut in half, the tuna reveals the thin layer of fruit meat and the seeds in pulp.*

## Harvesting cactus

The traditional method of harvesting prickly pear nopalitos is to pluck them with a green willow stick, folded double, like a pair of tongs. The tender green pad is easily snapped from the older plant. (You can eat prickly pear pads at any time of the year, but they toughen greatly with age.)

The few spines on the pads are either brushed off with a small twig brush or the pad is singed over a small fire. I rinse the pads well at home, then go over them again, very carefully, with a jackknife—just to be sure.

The fruits of the prickly pear are harvested when they are fully ruby red in the fall. I just carefully pick them with bare hands, but you might want to use gloves, as there are tiny spines here and there on the tunas. Like the nopalitos, you may brush them off with a twig brush or singe them over a small fire, held up by green willow branch tongs.

Saguaro fruits can't usually be picked. They often grow 15 to 30 feet off the ground. And you sure don't want to shinny up that armored trunk. So take a slim, long pole with you to harvest saguaro fruit, as do Indian harvesters. (Bob says those poles also work great to whack naughty boys who eat more than they gather.)

Gently poke the cluster of tunas loose, then pick them off the ground as they fall. *Don't* try to catch them. They are large, and have scattered spines.

Cholla buds are best harvested in sturdy jeans and long sleeves, as they

offer some protection from inadvertent pricks. You want to harvest the buds when they are swollen and large, but not after they begin to color up purple or loosen to open. The tight, fat, succulent spring buds are the vegetable you are after.

I would suggest using gloves and a large bucket or basket to harvest the buds. Gloves might not be traditional, but Native people have learned to be very careful handling the cholla.

The buds are relatively spine free, but check them over when you get home for the occasional pricker.



*Prickly pear jelly shines like a ruby—truly precious!*

## Cactus sticker first aid

The one problem with cactus is the tiny, brittle thorns on the pads. These quickly pierce the flesh and painfully resist attempts to pull them out with traditional methods, such as fingers or tweezers. They only break off and hurt.

Quite by accident, I discovered a nearly foolproof cure. And it doesn't hurt one bit. Even the smallest child will hold still for my extraction.

Simply coat the afflicted area lightly with Shoe-Goo, a silicone caulking-type product. Then let it dry totally. Usually, this happens with a thin coat in about 25 minutes. In the meantime, eat lunch, listen to music—anything to keep from picking at the glue. When completely dry, simply pull the “bandage” of Shoe-Goo off the area, intact. Nearly every sticker will lift off, without pain.

Repeat, if necessary. Of course if you have very sensitive skin, you might want to try a small dot of Shoe-Goo, first, to make sure you won't break out. But most folks are in such pain that they want the “treatment” **now**. I haven't run across anyone who had any problem with the silicone yet, but I'm sure there's someone out there.

## Some cactus treats

### Cactus fruit juice:

In late summer and during the fall, pick a basket or bucketful of purplish red tunas with tongs or bare handed, very carefully. Brush them with twig brushes or singe them to remove stickers. Cut the tough top and bottom off and slice the fruit in half. With a spoon, scoop out the pulp. Repeat until you have a large bowlful.

Mash well, then press through a screen colander to strain off the seeds. Add as much cold water as dictated by your taste; the pulp is very sweet, naturally. You can also freeze

this in ice trays until just about solid, then whiz in the blender for an icy treat. Add honey to sweeten if you'd prefer a sweeter treat.

#### **Cactus jelly:**

Harvest and de-spine fruits, as above. Prepare as above, but do not add water. I usually simmer the skins and seeds in boiling water, using just enough water to extract the extra juice and prevent scorching—about two cups to two quarts of cactus fruit “refuse.” Add the juice to the simmering pulp and bring it to a boil.

Line a colander with several thicknesses of cheesecloth and pour pulp and juice into it, with a large mixing bowl beneath to catch the clear juice. I tie it up with a stout cord and let drip overnight. In the morning, gently squeeze the jelly bag to extract more juice. Don't squeeze too hard or you'll lose clarity in your jelly.

For every three cups of juice, add 1 package of powdered pectin; do not double the recipe or the jelly may not jell. Bring to a boil in a large pot, stirring well. Then add 3 Tbsp. lemon juice and 3½ cups of sugar. Bring it to a boil, stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Boil one minute at a full rolling boil. Pour into hot jars, to within ½ inch of the top. Wipe the rim clean and place hot, previously boiled lids on and screw down the ring firmly tight. Process full jars in water bath canner for five minutes.

You also may simply add lemon juice and sugar to cactus fruit juice and boil to the jelling point, but this requires more sugar than most of us prefer to eat.

#### **Cactus fruit leather:**

Prepare the cactus fruits as above, straining out the seeds with a colander and saving juice and the seed-free pulp. Using either a cookie sheet or plastic tray of a home dehydrator, spread the pulp out about ¼-inch thick evenly on the lightly oiled cookie sheet or plastic tray. Then simply dehydrate gently until the sheet of fruit leather will peel up easily. I then

turn mine and dry awhile longer so it will not easily mold. This is the old cactus “candy” of desert Indians. In the old days, the puree was simply spread evenly on a clean boulder in the sun to dry quickly.

When the sheets are leathery and not tacky, roll them up (jelly roll style) and cut into smallish pieces with a sharp knife. Store as any other fruit leather. If you plan on storing for lengthy times, they should be bagged in Zip-Lock baggies and kept in the freezer to prevent possible molding. Ours never last that long.

### **Cooking with nopalitos**

Pick the best, tender new young prickly pear pads in the late spring. They are best after a rainy period, as they are plumper. Brush or singe off the spines. I cut the spine hubs out, as you do the eyes of a potato, just to be sure. You can tell the ones which housed spines from the more tender, new growth. The pads are then sliced, with the skin on, about green bean size and used in a wide variety of recipes. Here are a couple of ideas:

#### **Stir-fried nopalitos with chilies**

- 1 cup sliced nopalitos**
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms**
- 1 cup sliced roasted chilies**
- ½ cup sliced onion**
- 3 chopped firm ripe tomatoes, chopped**
- 2 Tbsp. oil or shortening**

**Stir fry the nopalitos, mushrooms, roasted chilies (seeded, mild, thick meaty), and sliced onion. When tender, add the chopped tomatoes and cook just until the tomatoes are hot, no longer.**

**Serve as you would a salsa, dipped up with crispy fried corn tortillas and sour cream and grated cheddar cheese, if you desire.**

**You'll forget you're eating cactus.**

#### **Venison stew with nopalitos**

- 1 lb. lean venison stew meat shortening for browning**
- 2 medium onions, chopped**
- 1 cup nopalitos**
- 1½ pints tomato sauce**
- 5 medium potatoes, diced medium**
- 1 cup cooked sweet corn**
- 3 long, fresh carrots, diced**
- 1 tsp. salt**
- 1 tsp. black, coarse ground pepper**
- 1 tsp. medium chili powder (powdered chilies, not mixed spices)**
- 1 Tbsp. honey**

**Brown the stew meat in the shortening, then add onions and continue stirring until they are transparent. Add the rest of the ingredients and simmer gently in a large, heavy pot until the meat is very tender. Cover, but add water, if necessary. Serve with hot corn bread or corn tortillas. Pretty darned good.**

### **Using cholla buds**

Cholla buds are very succulent, distinctive, and pleasant flavored. You can pick cholla buds in the spring—usually late April to mid May, depending on the location. Higher elevations tend to bloom later. Brush off any stray spines with a twig broom. You will want to cook or process your cholla buds soon after harvesting to prevent molding or toughening. Any that you will not be cooking soon should be briefly simmered, then dried off and laid on a dehydrator tray or even a window screen in the sun to dry. (If you use the latter method, throw an old see-through curtain over them to prevent insects from walking on your food.)

The dried buds may later be rehydrated, as is, or ground finely to make

a meal. This meal is often mixed with cornmeal or acorn meal in cooking.

**Fried cholla buds, squash, and onion:**

Simmer dried cholla buds in boiling water until tender. Dry. Slice thinly with onion and summer squash. Add spices to taste and gently fry until done. I serve mine with salsa and sour cream. It's a dandy early summer treat. You can also use fresh buds and sliced winter squash and onions, if you want. I also toss in a cup of sweet corn when the other vegetables are nearly done, for variation.

**Steamed cholla buds with chili:**

In a saucepan, add two inches of water and half a pint of home canned roasted, seeded, mild red chilies (unless your family prefers hotter food). Bring the water to a simmer. Then add a smaller colander with a dozen fresh cholla buds in it. Put a top on the pot and simmer to steam the cholla buds in "chili steam" until tender. Add water, as necessary, to keep from drying out. When the buds are fork tender, serve on a plate, topped with the chilies. This is good with ranch dressing drizzled on it and a plate of hot, tender flour tortillas and refried beans. Olé!

**Fried corn meal mush with cholla**

**½ cup cornmeal**  
**½ cup cholla meal**  
**2 2/3 cup boiling water**  
**1 cup cold water**  
**1 tsp. salt**

Grind dehydrated cholla buds in your food mill, grain mill, or blender until fine, like coarse flour. Bring water and salt to boil in large saucepan. Mix cornmeal, cholla bud meal, and cold water well. Add slowly to boiling water. Stir well to prevent scorching. Cook until thick, then cover and reduce heat to very low and simmer for another 10 minutes. Pour into a greased bread loaf pan and cover. Refrigerate overnight. By

morning it will be firm. Turn carefully out onto a plate and slice. Fry on both sides till a nice golden brown. Serve with butter or cactus fruit jelly. Mmmmm! (Instead of refrigerating and frying it, you can eat it as a hot cereal, with butter, salt, and drizzled with cactus fruit syrup.)

Sliced fresh nopalitos may be pickled, either alone or in any mixed pickle of your choice. Nopalitos retain their firmness and don't get limp in pickles, but neither are they crisp, as are cucumber pickles. Here's a cactus pickle recipe you might like to try.

**Pickled nopalitos**

**4 lbs. de-spined, sliced fresh nopalitos**  
**mustard seed**  
**dill seed (if dill flavoring is desired)**  
**garlic cloves, halved**  
**dry red hot peppers**  
**5 cups white vinegar**  
**5 cups water**  
**½ cup salt**

Rinse the sliced nopalitos in cold water. Pack them into pint jars. For each pint jar, add ½ teaspoon of whole mustard seed, ½ teaspoon of dill seed (optional), 1 clove garlic, peeled and halved, a small dry red hot pepper.

Combine the vinegar, water, and salt in saucepan and heat to boiling. Pour the boiling solution over nopalitos, filling to within ½ inch of top of jar. Wipe the jar rims clean, place hot, previously boiled lids on the jars, and screw the ring down firmly tight. Process in hot a water bath for 5 minutes, counting from the time the water in the canner reaches a full rolling boil after the jars have been added. Cool. Store for at least 2 weeks to allow the flavor to develop. Refrigerate the jar before serving and serve icy cold.

**Corn and nopalito salsa**

**1½ cups of cooked sweet corn**  
**½ cup chopped nopalitos**  
**2 Tbsp. chopped sweet red pepper**  
**¼ cup cooked black beans**  
**2 Tbsp. brown sugar**  
**½ tsp. salt**  
**pinch black pepper**  
**pinch turmeric**  
**3 Tbsp. vinegar**  
**1 seeded, chopped jalepeño (optional)**

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and mix well. Heat thoroughly. Cool and refrigerate. Serve cold. We love it on tacos and chalupas with a bit of sour cream. Remember, the nopalito is a vegetable, and can be used in any pickle recipe for mixed vegetables, sweet or sour. Δ

*For health & comfort, try wild*

# herbal teas

fireweed    raspberry leaf    strawberry leaf  
pineapple weed    spruce bud  
stinging nettle    mint

By Cynthia Andal

**T**he mention of herbal teas brings to mind pleasant conversations in a warmly scented kitchen, aided by the fragrant steam of a cup of Fireweed tea.

Completely aside from tasting great, most infusions of herbs offer a variety of health benefits, ranging from an abundance of naturally occurring vitamins and minerals, to the effects of a broad spectrum antibiotic. There exists an enormous wealth of information covering effects, gathering, drying, storing, and using herbs, but several deserve special mention simply because they are incredibly pleasant to drink. From a purely pleasure seeking point of view, these are the wild herbs you'll want to know when you venture forth into the wilderness armed with a basket (or two), gloves, an identification book, and a knife—seeking a winters' supply of nutrition and comfort.

## Fireweed

(*Epilobium Angustifolium*) A taste of the Orient. The tea made from the leaves of this very abundant plant is reminiscent of a traditional green tea

but with a hint of sweetness. Mild and light yellow-green, this tea is known medicinally for its mild laxative effect. Because it is slightly sweet, it benefits very little from the addition of sugar or milk and is enjoyable, hot or cold, all on its own. Also try fireweed mixed with some of

the other tea herbs. Mint, nettle, or chamomile are all tasty blends.

Picking fireweed for tea means finding it before it blossoms, which is in June here in British Columbia. Fireweed grows abundantly in recent burn sites (this is how it got its common name) and other disturbed areas such as clear cuts. It is one of Earth's natural regenerators, paving the way for the growth of other plants and stabilizing the soil with its creeping roots. Tread lightly and don't over-harvest. Try two in ten plants or less in a locally abundant area and never harvest near a watershed.

Snap the plant off at its base and then strip the leaves. Use fresh or dry leaves for a winter brew. Place one level handful in a warmed teapot or one tablespoon in a cup and pour boiling water over. Steep for five minutes and enjoy.

## Raspberry leaf

(*Rubus Idaeus*) Tangy and fruity well describes the delicious flavor of raspberry leaf tea. Many a mother can



Fireweed



*Strawberry leaf*

extol the pleasures and benefits of drinking honey-sweetened raspberry tea. The trace minerals, high Vitamin C content, and iron in abundance are all wonderful reasons to drink this brew—iced, hot, or, as some have found, frozen into popsicles for youngsters seeking a treat. It is also very high in calcium and is an aid in abundant milk production. As if this weren't enough, raspberry leaf tea is considered by many to be the most enjoyable herbal tea available.

Raspberry is a biennial plant, which means it takes two years to complete its life cycle. In the first year it grows as new, green leafy stalks from the base of the woody mother plant. This new growth is referred to as suckers and should be left alone to mature. The plant to pick leaves from is the thorny, woody stem which will bear fruit this year. The plant will blossom soon after leaf set in May or early June and the best leaves are picked before or during blossoming. However, leaves picked later are per-

fectly acceptable. Once the fruit is produced, the parent plant begins to visibly die. At this point do not pick any more leaves as the flavor is significantly altered. At all times during the season look for plants and leaves in good condition.

Use the leaves for tea either fresh or completely dry. Raspberry leaves experience a toxic chemical change while drying that makes them poisonous when partially dry or wilted. This is not lethal but will cause uncomfortable nausea and vomiting. They are unquestionably safe for use, even in large quantities, when fresh or entirely dry. Store enough for winter as this is a tea you are sure to love.

Drop a level handful of fresh herb into a warmed teapot and pour boiling water over to fill. Steep for about five minutes or more. Most people find that raspberry tea really benefits from a little honey to sweeten. Always take good care not to crush the dried herb as the flavor is much finer from the intact leaf.

Of course, domestic raspberry leaf has all of the same characteristics of the wild leaf, so if you or someone you know has a patch, go right ahead and use those leaves for tea. In a person's garden, it is especially important to be sure if any chemicals, including fertilizers, herbicides, or insecticides have been used during the growth of the raspberry plant.

## Strawberry leaf

(*Fragaria Spp.*) Much the same as raspberry leaf in uses, strawberry has a milder, more fruity flavor. The special benefit is that strawberry leaf is one of the highest naturally occurring sources of Vitamin C available. As with raspberry leaf it makes a very pleasant spring tonic and is especially beneficial to pregnant and nursing mothers and to young children. It is very soothing to the stomach.

Harvest young leaves, in good condition, throughout the spring and summer, but particularly during blossoming for the finest flavor. Again, use either fresh or completely dried leaves as strawberry leaf suffers from the same toxic change as raspberry leaf during the drying process. Its safety as a tea is not in question when the leaf is entirely dry or fresh but not between the two. Brew the same way as raspberry leaf tea but expect a more complex, fruitier flavor.

Take special care when harvesting because of strawberry's role as a colonizer and soil stabilizer in newly healing areas. Walk and harvest lightly.

Often strawberry favors poor soil conditions, such as sunny, dry, gravelly, or sandy slopes, where many other plants would not cope well at all. Try to avoid harvest altogether in these areas, and instead harvest in areas with more abundant growth.

Domestic strawberry leaf makes a tea with all of the same properties, though perhaps not as strong. Be sure if harvesting the domestic sort that the patch is free of chemicals.



*Stinging nettle*

## Stinging nettle

(*Urtica species*) What? Drink that for tea? Are you crazy? Yes, yes, and no. Nettle is a great food and great tea. It lays claim to a huge range of vitamins and minerals including iron, calcium, potassium, manganese, and Vitamins A, C, and D. In fact, nettle is one of the only land-growing plants that can boast of containing Vitamin D. Completely aside from all of that, nettle tea tastes really good.

The difficulty, of course, lies in gathering this notorious plant. Wear good gloves to protect the hands, and do not neglect long sleeves, full pants (not shorts), and proper shoes with socks (not sandals). If this sounds like the voice of bitter experience it's because it is.

Look in areas with rich soil, deep in damp forests, or in neglected gardens. Nettle gobbles up large amounts of land if the conditions are appropriate and a nettle stand is indicative of well balanced, humus-rich soil in good condition. Indeed, the addition of this plant to the compost heap yields a speedier process and a more balanced end result. A wonderful, all purpose

fertilizer can be made from nettle as well. Simply put about one pound of fresh nettle in a five gallon plastic pail and fill with rain water. Let sit. It will smell awful and foam and work for about three weeks. When the action has stopped, strain the liquid and your fertilizer is done. Dilute with 10 parts water to 1 part nettle brew for heavy feeders and about 20 to 1 for regular garden crops like onions and flowers.

Back to tea making. Plants should be 6 to 12 inches tall for the best tea. Cut them off and lay them on racks to dry. The plants can still sting when partially dry so wear gloves when working with them in the kitchen. When the plants are completely dry, strip the leaves off and store in an air-tight container. Brew as for strawberry leaf and sweeten to taste with a bit of honey. The addition of a little lemon juice is said to improve the flavor but this seems a bit excessive.

In some places, nettle is considered a noxious weed so be aware if gathering someplace that may have been sprayed. Also consider starting your own nettle patch, tucked away some-

where where it will be left alone to grow and flourish. That way you need never be without this wonderful healthful plant and perhaps you might think to enjoy it as one of the earliest, tastiest spring greens.

## Mint

(*Mentha Canadensis and others*) This tea herb is the basis of some of the most popular herbal teas, and its fame is well deserved. Pungent and aromatic, it is a well documented



*Mint*



*Pineapple weed*

stomach settler, especially appreciated after over indulging in rich foods. Luckily enough, it is relatively easy to find, identify, and gather. The square stems of the mint family are difficult to mistake, but rubbing the leaves to release the aroma is unmistakable.

Look for mint and its relatives in moist riparian areas beside, or sometimes in lakes and rivers. For this reason, it is especially important to gather responsibly as these areas are both the easiest to damage and the hardest to heal.

Use the herb fresh, or dry it enough for winter's use when a cheery cup, perhaps mixed with pineapple weed, will remind you of summer. Mint is particularly good gathered when it is young, in late spring and early summer, but the harvest can continue as long as you can access your gathering areas.

Should you wish to cultivate your own mint garden, be very aware that it has absolutely no regard for boundaries. Mint is best raised in a pot so that its rapacious growth can be controlled. It is interesting to note that

North Americans have only one wild mint, *Mentha Canadensis*, or *Mentha Arvensis*, so often the "wild" mint we are gathering is actually domestic mint escaped from captivity. As always, when gathering in a garden, be sure that the mint has not been sprayed with any chemicals.

## Pineapple weed

Pineapple weed, which is also called false chamomile (*Matricaria Matricarioides*), is certainly the flower of hope. It is most often seen poking its sunny head from between the sidewalk stones, eager to spread its inviting delicious pineapple scent when stepped on or brushed. Pineapple weed uses and effects are identical to the familiar domestic chamomile (*Matricaria Chamomilla*) in that it is a mild sedative and soothing to the stomach. Mixed with mint, it makes a relaxing, dreamy tea that a person can't help but enjoy. The effect is mild enough to be enjoyed by children and it is an especially beneficial herb to new mothers. Indeed, the latin name *Matricaria* means mother (matri) dear (caria).

Pineapple weed blooms from spring until well beyond frost and is relatively easy to find. Harder though is to find a patch uncontaminated by someone vainly attempting to eradicate this cheery harbinger of calm introspection. As I look out of my window, I see a fine pineapple weed patch. My whole family enjoys this



*Spruce buds*

herb so much that we have used it for our lawn. You can buy lawn chamomile from Richters Herbs in Goodwood, Ontario, but it is very easy to naturalize the wild sort.

To gather for tea, it is the flowers you want. These are the yellow buds that look like daisy centers without the rays. Some enthusiasts include the bitter feathery leaves, but this interferes with the gentle, flowery flavor. This must be a matter of personal taste. Try to gather enough for a winter's supply, but this can be rather difficult as the flowers are so small and the taste so delicious that you will want to drink a great deal. Luckily, it mixes well with other herbs, specifically mint and fireweed.

## Spruce bud

(*Picea species*) It seems incredible that anyone could have suffered from scurvy in a land with such abundant, year-round Vitamin C free for the taking. Here is another tea absolutely stuffed with it. Spruce, pine, and fir all yield a spicy, flavorful, very warming brew from those acid green shoots that spring forth in the early summer, making the whole tree look several shades lighter in color. Having tried spruce, fir, and pine, the finest, mildest tea is made from the

bud of the spruce tree. Spruce and fir can be differentiated by the needles. Spruce needles roll easily between the fingers while fir, being flat, do not roll at all. The bud, when young, releases easily from the tree.

When you harvest the young buds, you are taking this year's growth, so be gentle. Pretend you are a grazing deer and take a nibble here and a nibble there and then move on to the next tree. Never harvest the topmost growth as this will cause the tree to grow two tops and effectively weaken it. Evergreen trees are rich in vitamins, particularly Vitamin C, which makes this especially valuable since it is available year-round. The buds can be dried for winter use but this is unnecessary. Although the new growth yields the mildest tea, the spruce tips can actually be harvested

all year. Indeed, some people prefer the stronger, spicier tea from the winter spruce tips.

Use one teaspoon of fresh herb for each cup. Pour boiling water over it and let it steep for about five minutes. This yields a strong tea so adjust it to your liking. This tea seems to call for a blazing fire and a plate of ginger cookies and is a perfect tea for a cozy winter night.

Tea gathering, just like tea drinking, can be comforting, warming and relaxing, or exhilarating, uplifting and refreshing. It is always enjoyable and it is a wonderful excuse to get out and enjoy your natural surrounding. Gathering herbal teas gives one time to think about things. It is a good time to reflect upon our place on the Earth and to remember that we are not the only species who rely on the natural balance. Wildcrafters can do a lot of damage to the areas in which they harvest. Goldenseal and ginseng in the wild are, for the most part, a thing of the past. But harvesting conscientiously will ensure a future full of herbal teas and wild foods.

## An herbal addendum

This article speaks from a large amount of personal experience. However, not everyone can have a full laboratory in their home. A good identification book is a must for wildcrafting. There are so many that a list would be futile. Find one that you are happy with and that is appropriate for your area and climate. Beyond that, it is a good idea to have, or have access to, several herbals. Several because you may wish to cross reference information. In the box I have listed some valuable resources which have become my personal favorites. They were all drawn upon for the compilation of this article. All are fairly complete and each has a unique point of view.

This article, in turn, is a rewritten excerpt from my own booklet, *Popular Circumpolar Tea Herbs*. Δ

- **From Earth to Herbalist** by Gregory L. Tilford, 1998
- **Edible Medicinal Plants of the West** by Gregory L. Tilford, 1997
- **Discovering Wild Plants** by Janice J. Schofield, 1989
- **Edible and Medicinal Plants of the Rocky Mountains and Neighbouring Territories** by Terry Willard, Ph. D., 1992
- **Wise Woman Herbal for the Child Bearing Year** by Susan S. Weed
- **Wild Coffee and Tea Substitutes of Canada** by Nancy Turner and Adam Szezawinski, National Museum of Natural Sciences, 1978
- **Plants of Northern B.C.** by Mackinnon, Pojar, and Coupé, 1992
- **Harvesting the Northern Wild** by Marilyn Walker, 1984

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# THE IRREVERENT JOKE PAGE

(Believing it is important for people to be able to laugh at themselves, this is a continuing feature in *Backwoods Home Magazine*. We invite readers to submit any jokes you'd like to share to BHM, P.O. Box 712, Gold Beach, OR 97444. There is no payment for jokes used.)

A fellow finds himself in front of the Pearly Gates. St. Peter explains that it's not so easy to get in heaven. There are some criteria before entry is allowed.

For example, was the man religious in life? Attend church?  
"No."

St. Peter told him that's bad.

Was he generous? Give money to the poor? Charities?  
"No."

St. Peter told him that that too was bad.

Did he do any good deeds? Help his neighbor? Anything?  
"No."

St. Peter was becoming concerned. "Look," he says, "everybody does something nice sometime. Work with me, I'm trying to help. Now think."

The man says, "There was this old lady. I came out of a store and found her surrounded by a dozen Hell's Angels. They had taken her purse and were shoving her around, taunting and abusing her.

"I got so mad I threw my bags down, fought through the crowd, and got her purse back. I then helped her to her feet. I then went up to the biggest, baddest biker and told him how despicable, cowardly and mean he was and then spat in his face."

"Wow," said Peter, "That's impressive. When did this happen?"

"Oh, about 10 minutes ago," replied the man.

A member of the United States Senate, known for his hot temper and acid tongue, exploded one day in mid-session and began to shout, "Half of this Senate is made up of cowards and corrupt politicians!"

All the other Senators demanded that the angry member withdraw his statement, or be removed from the remainder of the session.

After a long pause, the angry member acquiesced. "Okay," he said, "I withdraw what I said. Half of this Senate is *not* made up of cowards and corrupt politicians!"

The mother of three notoriously unruly youngsters was asked whether or not she'd have children if she had to do it over again.

"Sure," she replied, "but not the same ones."

**Q: How do you stop a Taliban tank?**

**A: Shoot the guy pushing it.**

When Einstein died and arrived at the gates of heaven, St. Peter wouldn't let him in until he proved his identity. Einstein scribbled out a couple of his equations, and was admitted into paradise.

And when Picasso died, St. Peter asked, "How do I know you're Picasso?"

Picasso sketched out a couple of his masterpieces. St. Peter was convinced and let him in.

When George W. Bush died, he went to heaven and met the man at the gates. "How can you prove to me you're George W. Bush?" Saint Peter said.

Bush replied, "Well heck, I don't know."

St. Peter says, "Well, Albert Einstein showed me his equations and Picasso drew his famous pictures. What can you do to prove you're George W. Bush?"

Bush replies, "Who are Albert Einstein and Picasso?"

St. Peter says, "It must be you, George, c'mon on in."

**Hillary Clinton went for her annual exam. After the exam, the OB-GYN told her that she was pregnant, and in great shape. Hillary couldn't believe the news and stormed out of the office. She rushed to her limo and picked up the phone to her husband.**

**"You got me pregnant! How could you be so careless?" There is a silence on the other end. Finally, she hears Bill's voice.**

**"Who is this?"**

Bush and Powell are sitting in a bar. A guy walks in and asks the barman, "Isn't that Bush and Powell?"

The barman says, "Yep, that's them."

So the guy walks over and says, "Hello. What are you guys doing?"

Bush replies, "We're planning World War III."

The guy asks, "Really? What's going to happen?"

Bush says, "Well, we're going to kill 10 million Afghans and one bicycle repairman."

The guy exclaims, "Why are you gonna kill a bicycle repairman?"

Bush turns to Powell and says, "See, I told you no one would worry about the 10 million Afghans."

# Ask Jackie

Fastest cooking beans, bread in a jar, planting wild rice, making hominy, fruit leather, horseradish, and more

*I would like to know which dry beans cook up fastest.*

**Jim and Cindy Dodds**  
*dodds98@gte.net*

I've never actually done a test on my beans to see which are actually the fastest cooking. With beans, it depends on how fresh they are, as well as the variety. Old beans "stay good" for centuries. But they do take longer to become tender. Generally, the smaller beans cook up quicker. The fastest cooking of the beans we raise are Native American varieties, the tiny, nearly wild tepary beans (about the size of a lentil), Zuni shalakos, and Hopi white beans. Seed for these varieties is available from Native Seeds/SEARCH, 526 N. 4th Ave., Tucson, AZ 85705-8450 or [www.nativeseeds.org](http://www.nativeseeds.org). Generally, store-bought pinto beans also cook up pretty quickly.

**Jackie**

*I have been seeing a lot about baking bread in a jar. The jar manufacturers do not recommend this. It appears a lot of people freeze them after baking, which seems a waste of a jar to me. Have you any experience with this?*

**Sher**  
*sherrylynn@hotmail.com*

I'm assuming you mean quick breads, such as banana bread, not yeast breads, such as white bread or whole wheat bread. Yes, I can quick breads in canning jars. You can use about any recipe. I cut circles of

waxed paper to just fit snugly inside, on the bottom of wide mouth pint jars. Use jars which are hot from sterilizing in boiling water, but dry from the heat. Quickly place a waxed paper circle in the jar, wax toward the jar. Then fill the jar a little over half full with your batter. Bake open, filled jars, placed on a cookie sheet in a 325-degree oven. When done, take one jar at a time out of the oven. (Should the bread have risen past the rim of the jar, slice it off flush with the top with a knife.) Clean the rim of the jar and place hot, dry, previously boiled lid on jar and screw down ring firmly tight. Repeat with all jars, moving as quickly as you can to preserve the heat in the jars. The jars will seal on cooling.

Should a jar not seal, use it soonest or refrigerate or freeze.

When I use a new recipe, I experiment with how full the jar should be with one jar first. It's best to leave half an inch of head room at the top of the jar for a better seal. Once you have the correct filling mark, do the rest of the jars.

These canned breads make great gifts.

The reason the canning manuals do not recommend this method of preserving quick breads is that one must be very careful with cleanliness of jar, lid and handling, so as not to introduce molds, and that one must work very quickly or the jars will not seal and the breads will not keep long on the shelf.

**Jackie**



**Jackie Clay**

*I would like to know how to plant wild rice and when you plant it. I want to start some in a pond on my property and have no idea how to plant it. Can you just plant the stuff you buy in the store? Does it come up year after year and does it spread?*

**Mary M**  
*roadrunner@onlink.net*

Wild rice (which is not a rice, but something much better) grows in the Eastern U.S. and up through Canada. But the larger-seeded varieties are pretty much limited to Minnesota, Wisconsin, and adjacent areas of Canada, Ontario, and Manitoba. So if you live in another area, you could try planting a small plot and see if you might be able to grow it. I've grown a lot of things that "experts" said would never grow in my location.

Much of the wild, wild rice, growing in lakes and streams of the north-land was once planted by the Ojibway Indians. It is of such value, it's a shame that more people today don't follow this practice.

Wild rice is particular about its growing location. It won't grow in contaminated or stagnated water. It must have clean, moving water without heavy competition from other water plants and reeds. The water

must be at least two to four inches deep, but not deeper during the spring or the plant will die as it germinates and the plant begins to grow. Strong, older plants can live in water up to three feet deep. You'll have better luck growing wild rice if your pond has an inlet and outlet, allowing for gently flowing water, than if the pond has no movement.

Plant your seed either during the fall or spring. The fall is best if you aren't bothered by many feeding ducks, as they will dig down and eat the seed. Otherwise the spring will do. The seed is scattered in a band about six feet wide, along the necessary depths. The traditional way is to wade in the muck and smush seed in by hand every few feet, as you wade. Do not plant it too deeply, however.

The first sign you'll see of your wild rice planting is two floating leaves on the water in April or May. From there, it quickly becomes more "grassy" in appearance, rising from the water with a flower head.

No, you can't plant the wild rice from the supermarket. It has been processed by drying and toasting, which kills the viability of the seed. You must buy wild rice seed or, better yet, harvest some of your own seed from a body of water nearby.

In August and September, the wild rice is ripe and will shatter quite easily. When we lived in Minnesota, we took a canoe down the rivers and along secret lake shores to harvest wild rice. One person sat in the stern and poled slowly through a stand of manomin (wild rice). The other knelt in the center, on a clean tarp covering the bottom of the canoe. By gently bending the armfuls of wild rice over the gunnel, you could flail the grain onto the tarp with a smooth stick.

You might like to give it a try. It is a traditional, very fulfilling way to spend a weekend—and bring home many pounds of wonderful grain to use. It only needs to be dried, toasted

gently, and the grain threshed from the chaff.

Yes, wild rice will come up, year after year and it will spread from its own seed. But I've never known a patch to become invasive. Good luck with your own patch.

**Jackie**

*I would like to know how to lye corn to make hominy and also how to can it. Pressure or water bath?*

**Glenie Peebles**  
[gleniep@errec.net](mailto:gleniep@errec.net)

Here's my grandma's recipe for hominy, made using lye:

Put 2 quarts of dry field corn in a large enameled pan with no chips. Add 8 quarts of water and 2 ounces of lye. Boil vigorously for half an hour. Then steep for 20 minutes with no heat. Rinse off the lye with several hot water rinses, then several cold water rinses. Work hominy well with hands until dark tips of kernels are removed. Separate the tips by floating them off the kernels. Add water to cover hominy by an inch or more. Boil 5 minutes; change water. Repeat 4 times. Then cook until kernels are soft. Drain.

Pack hominy into jars to within 1 inch of the top. Add 1 tsp. salt to each quart jar, ½ tsp. to each pint jar. Fill to within ½ inch of top of jars with water in which corn was cooked or boiling water.

Wipe the rims clean, place hot, previously boiled lids on each jar and screw down the rings until they are firmly tight. Process pint jars for 60 minutes and quarts 70 minutes at 10 pounds pressure. (Adjust the pressure to your altitude if necessary; see your canning manual.)

The canning information is current. **Never use a water bath canner for any low acid vegetable or meat product.** These are low acid foods and are dangerous to can without pressure.

**Jackie**

*Would you please tell me how to make fruit leathers?*

**Cindy Winton-Bunting**  
[mountainwoman@snet.net](mailto:mountainwoman@snet.net)

I'd be glad to; they're our son, David's favorite snack. And they're so easy to make. First peel and gently simmer your fruit until it is tender.



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Then press it through a sieve or puree in a blender. For small fruits, such as cherries or strawberries, simply whiz in the blender. Pour out the pureed fruit onto clean cookie sheets or flexible plastic dehydrator trays. Dusting them lightly with corn starch helps keep them from sticking, but I don't always do this. Dehydrate gently until the leather can be peeled easily and gently up from the tray. I cut the sheets into serving-size lengths at this time. Sometimes it is necessary to turn it over and finish dehydrating it, depending on tray and humidity.

I sometimes add cinnamon to apple or pear leather to "spice" it up, or chopped nuts for an interesting texture. Once you start, you'll quickly begin experimenting for personal favorites.

**Jackie**

*I'm writing to see if you have a horseradish recipe. I have a 40' x 40'*

*patch of horseradish and have some large roots in it. I would like to know how and when to dig the roots and how to prepare them.*

**Robert Kager**  
**Mount Vernon, WA**

I'm jealous. What a patch of horseradish. I like it on all meat and use it in a lot of recipes, as well. In issue #73, Jan/Feb. 2002 of *BHM*, I enclosed a recipe for canning horseradish. Besides this, we most frequently just peel fresh roots, grate them quite finely and add vinegar and salt or vinegar, salt, and mayonnaise, sealing the jar, which is refrigerated between uses. Like anything else, fresh is best.

Dig your big roots in the fall. You can usually store them in the fridge or root cellar for up to two months. If you pack them in sand and hold them in a dark, cold, but not freezing place, they will last longer. The hottest roots

will be those you dig during the driest part of the summer, the more mild—if there is such a thing as mild horseradish—are grown in cooler weather, with more watering.

You can get more large roots, and straighter roots by thinning out the bed. Some folks even dig the small roots, saving the straightest, pencil-size roots and replant them in rows on the edges of their patch. In this way, you'll get larger, straighter

roots with fewer branches which are easier to process.

And if you thin your bed, how about sending me a dozen small roots, Robert? Good luck.

**Jackie**


*I live in S. Central Alaska, where we eat a lot of salmon. I can raw salmon by exhausting jars in boiling water for 10 minutes before placing on lids and pressure canning. My husband says this step is unnecessary, disregarding what all my canning books say. His grandma, a wonderful woman, who has been canning for 60 years, does not take this extra step. She also reuses lids...something I refuse to do. Please help settle this disagreement. "Grandma never had any problems," my husband says. I say Grandma was damn lucky!*

**Kate McLaughlin**  
**Chenega Bay, AK**

This is a case where you both are right. Really. While you can safely can salmon without exhausting (heating the meat) before canning it, you must make sure you thoroughly exhaust steam from your canner, meaning that that canner full of cold meat has had enough time to heat, through and through. This is especially important when you are canning thick salmon steaks in quart jars. The contents of pint jars take much less time to heat, through and through, than do quart jars. If the petcocks or vent is closed too soon (before forceful streams of steam exit them for 10 minutes), the processing time will be inadequate. Thus your salmon could be in danger of spoiling.

I can salmon without liquid, just the brine-rinsed steaks, packed into hot jars, with a teaspoon of salt.

When canning salmon, it is safest to use pint jars, but I've used quarts for years, just being sure that my canner took enough time to thoroughly heat its contents before I began processing. I usually add just a little extra



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water to the canner to allow for this extra heating up time; you don't want your canner to steam dry.

As for reusing lids...mmmm...well, in an emergency, it can be done—kind of. By gently pulling the lids off some jars, with the fingers, instead of a can opener, you can usually re-use them for jams, jellies or pickles; high-acid foods only. I sure wouldn't reuse them for vegetables, meat, or fish. That's a wee bit terrifying.

**Jackie**

*My question is about canning vegetable soup. I made vegetable soup and used tomatoes that were already canned. I would like to can the soup. Can the tomatoes be recanned if I can the soup?*

**Dede Haiar**  
dhaiar33@aol.com

Sure, go ahead and can that soup. I've used pre-canned ingredients a lot. In fact, I can a lot of mixtures

during the winter, using tomato products, vegetables and meats that I quickly canned during the busy harvest season. I'm sure that there is some loss of nutrients, but I'll bet we more than make up for it by canning fresh fruits and vegetables. When I can vegetable soup, I just heat it to boiling, but do not boil. That way, the vegetables do not turn to mush during processing. Good luck and good eating.

**Jackie**

*My husband and I have started raising hair goats and rabbits. I have some concerns as to winter hardiness of these animals, as we live in Montana. I have read that Angora goats need extra protection in the winter, as they are desert animals. What about Angora rabbits? Do Angora goats really need more protection than do my dairy goats? Do Angora rabbits need more protection than normal furred rabbits?*

**Jacquie Andrews**  
Cascade, MT

I have not found that Angora rabbits or goats need any more winter protection than do other breeds. I had both, while living years back in Minnesota. They were kept in the same conditions as were my other dairy goats and rabbits with good results. With any goat, just be sure they have a well-bedded shelter, providing protection from driving rain or snow. In extreme weather, allow several animals to run in the same shelter so they can bunch together for warmth.

Angora rabbits require no different winter housing as do other breeds of rabbits. Just shelter them from wind, drafts, and extreme cold.

**Jackie**

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# Letters

(Dear Readers - Thank you for writing to Backwoods Home Magazine. The opinions and suggestions we receive from our readers are very important to us. We regret that we are no longer able to print or individually respond to every letter received due to the volume. We do read every letter received, and pass them along to the editor or writer concerned. We print a selection from our mail that best represents the views and concerns of our readers.

— The Editors)

## ASG reader

*I am writing to tell you that I love your mag. It is much better than ASG and I am glad they threw me your way. I would be glad to have a wife like Jackie. She is the best.*

James Gilmour, Somonauk, IL

*First off, thanks! Thank you so much. I was feeling ripped off with the way ASG/SRJ was becoming another B.S. survival mag. Here's my payment for a year's subscription for Backwoods Home Magazine! I am finally relieved to be able to read about things that are much more important than "new" "improved" junk! Thanks again. Sorry I never knew you existed. My loss! But I've gained now. Thanks again. Long live America, the country, not the Government.*

Wally Roberts, Sharpsburg, GA

*Thank you for a fine publication. I was a subscriber to American Survival Guide/Self Reliance Journal. It was a shame they became politically correct and are no longer published. Your publication has filled the void and I am enjoying your magazine.*

*I enjoy the articles on firearms by Massad Ayoob. Jackie Clay is very knowledgeable and her information is very helpful. Claire Wolfe is an excellent writer and what she says makes good common sense.*

*The articles on the Coming American Dictatorship by John Silveira were very well researched and written. It is "must" reading for anyone who loves freedom and this country.*

*Enclosed is a check for 2 more years of your excellent magazine. Keep up the good work.*

Paul Calberg, Feeding Hills, MA

*I'm another Amer. Surv. Guide subscriber who's going to subscribe to your fine mag.*

*There are 2 things that really irritate me about your mag. ...*

*1) I now have another stack of mag's that I have to save.*

*2) You advertise more great books than I can afford to buy.*

Sam Scott, Dodge City, KS

*I was an ASG (SRJ!?! ) subscriber. Thank God you guys took over. Bless you all.*

James Brown, Lancaster, OH

## Applause

*Great Magazine. Have watched your steady progress at surpassing all others (Mother Earth, etc). I have been a subscriber to TMEN since about its beginning. Unfortunately it seems to cater more to the so called politically correct yuppies. I am going to let that subscription run out and carry on with you. Keep up the good work.*

Dennis McLallen, Friendsville, PA

*I love your no B.S. style. Jackie Clay is my favorite writer. I enjoyed her series on building a log cabin. Also like her gardening and canning tips. I enjoyed the "Coming Dictatorship" series a lot. I've saved all of my issues of BHM so I can go back and read them over again.*

*BHM is a pocket of fresh air in a world full of crap! Keep up the good work!*

Samuel A. Walters, Newark, OH

*As long as I suck air and have money I plan on subscribing to your outstanding magazine.*

Philip Donovan, Jr, Epping, NH

*Keep it up guys! Yours is the most useful and honest publication on the planet. Don't ever change!*

Jeff Bowman, Rockwood, TN

*I love the articles on basic living.*

*I live in a town of about 300 people so I'm in the country so to speak. I must admit that I'm not very prepared for an emergency situation. We are in an extreme drought condition. I am not able to do any kind of watering because of strict water rationing. So a garden is pretty much out.*

*I am a ham radio operator and I am prepared for emergency communications which I was able to provide after the Sweetwater, TX tornado of 1986.*

*I can also do some reloading of ammunition for my guns and would like to pursue this to a greater extent.*

*In keeping my subscription current I feel I will be getting valuable information for the most basic means of getting by in a tight situation.*

*I also feel the reason you do the magazine is because you are concerned for your fellow man and want others to be prepared and if you are well prepared you might be able to help your neighbors and friends if they are in need.*

*I'm also interested in alternative energy sources. Hopefully the cost of this equipment will become more affordable someday.*

*Of course my goal is to be as free as possible. I am an electronics technician and my wife is a calibrator. We both work for the same company which manufactures instrumentation for the nuclear and radiation field. It*

would be nice to be self sufficient and not have to rely on someone else for a living.

*Above all please don't go the way of other mags that were similar to yours and let the big money guys take them over to serve their own agendas. Thanks for a nice publication and may God Bless America, the Constitution, and of course all of you at BHM.*

John & Connie Tomlinson  
Blackwell, TX

## Anthologies

*Got your 10th year anthology recently, and it was EXCELLENT. Just like your previous anthology issues, all the meat (articles), without the flab (repetitious advertising). Thank you. So when is the 11th year anthology coming out? I know, I know, bitch, bitch, bitch. But I still can't wait for it to come out; the CD is really convenient and easy, but I like to read in the outdoors, and don't like to read off computer screens outside.*

J.R. Guerra, South Texas

## Cornish game hen

*One question: What really is a Cornish game hen? Where to get, how to raise, etc. Thanks a whole bunch.*

Jelaine Zastrow, Two Rivers, WI

Rock Cornish game hens are a cross between White Rocks and Cornish hens. They grow to size—14 to 16 ounces—in just about four weeks. For information about them, go out on line and plug “Cornish game hens” AND “raising” into a search engine. There are plenty of places that are dying to sell them to you and they'll tell you how to raise them.

—John

## Emergency solar article

*There is an error in Jeff Yago's article “Emergency Solar Power for \$950” which appeared in the*

*January/February 2002 issue. On page 30 the maximum wattage is incorrect.*

John  
Louisiana\_termite@juno.com

There is an error in the text. Where it reads, “Two 75-watt 12-volt modules will require at least a 6-amp charge controller; four modules will require a 12-amp controller,” it should read, “One 75-watt 12-volt module will require at least a 6-amp charge controller; two modules will require a 12-amp controller. Sorry for the inconvenience.

—Jeff Yago

## The Whole Sheebang

*I am very pleased with your magazine and have purchased it directly from the shelf for a number of years. While visiting your website I noticed a tremendous deal you call the Whole Sheebang (this is the Internet version of the ad on page 99—Editor). Quite excellent and it will enjoy a place in my homesteading library and will be of great value when I make the move to the country upon retirement from active service.*

Sgt. Paul E. Nunes, Madrid, Spain

## No new laws

*I have given some serious thought about not renewing my subscription to Backwoods Home Magazine. Not that I don't like what I read—mostly I do. Not that I don't agree with your writings—mostly I do. And I learn a lot about American history. After I receive and read each copy, I become really upset about what is happening in our Government and there's not a damn thing I can do about it. But I prefer being informed and upset to the alternative. Enclosed please find my check for renewal.*

*As for the war on terrorism, yes we should do something, but I can see some major problems. First, I really don't want to give up any of my Constitutional Rights to fight terror-*

*ism. With freedom comes vulnerability and responsibility. Another problem I see is creating a bureaucracy that will never go away, even if terrorism does. Whenever the A.T.G. (anti-terrorism group), or whatever they want to call it, is formed it will be here forever and terrorism will never be defeated (although the major groups probably will). If terrorism is wiped out, there goes lots of people's jobs, and that's not going to happen. I would like to see a six-month moratorium on making any laws concerning terrorism. Cool heads should make these laws. I hate to see laws passed on the premise of “Do something, even if it's wrong.” As an example, the gun control act of 1968. Wait a while and see if we really need new laws. Let's enforce the laws that we already have and not make any new ones.*

*By the way, your article on “The Coming American Dictatorship” would be a really good basis for a movie.*

Lee Burrus, Herrick, IL

## Claire Wolfe

*I thought Claire Wolfe's article on “Living the Outlaw Life” was great. Those who value freedom must continue to work toward—and talk about—liberty.*

Jane Baumgartner, Lincoln, NE

## Personal guns

*I enjoyed your “My View” article on personal guns. I was employed by Uncle Sam for 30 years and during that “tour of duty” I was never without my personal Colt 45 Automatic—regardless of where I was standing! Just because I carried a Federal Badge was no guarantee that “people would behave accordingly.” However, one look at “old Sam Colt” and the meanest of them all was a gentle puppy! (I was lucky—I never had to fire it in anger).*

William F. French  
Sharon Springs, NY

### Now I lie me down to sleep...

When I was young,  
My dad once lived in a house  
That years before  
Had been a funeral home.  
There wasn't a clue of that any-  
more.  
I know.  
I made a game of  
Searching from room to room,  
Looking for...What was I look-  
ing for?  
But I found nothing.  
Still, in the dark,  
When the appliances were off,  
The family asleep,  
And the outside traffic had all  
gone home,  
I would lie perfectly still in the  
dark  
And listen to the wind outside,  
And the creaking and groaning  
of the house,  
And was it my imagination,  
Or were those the voices of  
those  
Who had spent their last day in  
the sunshine there,  
Before being entombed in a  
dark hole forever,  
Trying to say something to me?  
The only other sound  
Was the sweep of the blanket  
over my skin  
As I brought it up to my mouth,  
To muffle my screams.

John Silveira  
Brookings, OR

### Divorce

As the divorce crept closer,  
You began to act  
More and more  
Like the woman  
I fell in love with  
So many years before.  
I felt like crying.  
I thought that woman was dead.

John Silveira  
Brookings, OR

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